T' BACCA QUEEN

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T' BACCA QUEEN

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A Novel

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BY

Theodora Wilson Wilson

35

New York
D. Appleton and Company
1902

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Published April, 1902

"Thy will be done on earth." Ah! thus we pray,
And wonder at the weary, blank delay.
His will is Justice, Purity, and Love,
The earthly reflex of the heart above.
The sorrows of God's heart! Ah, who may guess
Those yearnings of almighty tenderness?
He would that we should join Him in the war
To crush the power of night for evermore,
He wills, we will not. Ours the sin and wrong.
And so this tortured world moves slowly on,
While with a careless insolence of mirth
We thrust aside the will of God on earth,
And down the ages rings that cry anew,
"Father, forgive, they know not what they do."

PREFATORY NOTE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION

WITHOUT anticipating any criticism of this novel, one can heartily congratulate Miss Theodora Wilson on her knowledge of Westmoreland, and her delineation of the character of the "Fellsiders," as they are locally called, of whom she writes. The graphic descriptions of the death-bed of old Carradus, of T' Bacca Queen's *début* at the Primrose Ball, and the singing competition, are sure to be read with interest, while the scene between Calthwaite and Nell on Windy Scar is tragically and pitiably real.

American readers may find that the swift transition from Nell's smooth and gentle English to the fierce rudeness of her northern dialect is a little puzzling; but those of us who dwell among the dalesfolk of Cumberland and Westmoreland know that the people are bilingual. They have one speech for "foreigners," another for native use: in this matter Miss Wilson is true to the life.

H. D. RAWNSLEY,

Honourable Canon of Carlisle, Vicar of Crosthwaite, Keswick, and Rural Dean.

T' BACCA QUEEN

CHAPTER I

LUNCH was over, and George Glyn, rising from his seat, crossed to his daughter's side.

"Allow me, my dear," he said, in the quiet manner he invariably used when speaking to a woman; and with a certain gentle politeness the stately old man assisted Mary on to a couch near the window, from whence she could obtain a full view of the peaceful garden.

Mary Glyn had passed away from her first girlhood, and had been more or less of an invalid for years.

One hot summer day ten years before, an eager, well-built girl came running down the stairs, brightly excited over an impending tennis match.

She slipped—that was all. And from that time life—the active physical enjoyment of what life holds most dear—was over for Mary Glyn.

The intellectual glory of existence was still hers. All her keenness, her strong love of the World's children, and still stronger love of the World's Father, remained; but though some guessed, none ever knew the agony of life disappointment which seized her at times, when long days of extra torture grasped her once vigorous frame, and when events of busy, strenuous activity in which it was impossible for her to participate, passed across and away from the path that she was destined to follow.

There was a great companionship between the widower and his daughter, and to-day, after the man had set down the little tray of coffee on a table by the window, George Glyn sat a few minutes by the couch before hurrying away to his office.

Mr. Glyn was the lawyer of Farbiggin.

There were other lawyers in the town, of course, but it was to him that town and county alike looked for guidance in difficult and critical situations.

He and his fathers before him possessed the documents and deeds of all the gentry around. There were few family secrets that he did not hold; few parcels of land which he or his had not conveyed; few mortgages which he had not arranged.

Mrs. Glyn had died many years before, leaving him with three children. One of the sons, Henry, the Vicar of Farbiggin, was married, but Ryder and Mary were still at home.

"I hardly expect to be in to tea, dear," Mr. Glyn remarked presently. "John Carradus wants to see me this afternoon on business. His will, I anticipate. He is near his end now. His has been a strange life—I wish I possessed more influence over him, but I am his servant in legal matters."

"Will he be very unjust, father?"

"Not unjust, probably, but hard—certainly hard."

Mr. Glyn rose from the great lounge chair and paced the room steadily. He was a tall, spare man, grey, in fact almost white-headed. He wore a moustache and beard closely cut, which hid the thin lips which formed the sensitive but resolute mouth. His nose was long and straight, without the least hint of either an upward or a downward turn, and his grey eyes were almost hidden by the overhanging eyebrows, while his complexion was of that brown-red which told of hard riding and walking and fearless combats with the rains and storms of Moorshire.

"If I were sure that his soul were saved," he ejaculated, thinking out loud, as was his habit now in the presence of his daughter. "Such a man! So self-righteous — such a

hard drinker, yet Carradus was never a drunkard—so unforgiving. Dear Lord, do Thou in Thy mercy save his soul."

Mary did not speak, for she knew her father in this mood.

He was a keen lawyer—none keener, though honourable to the minutest point of the law. He was, moreover, deeply "religious," and was superintendent of an unsectarian Sunday school which he had built himself in the roughest quarter of the town. He was a leader of mission services, and a controller of after-meetings.

Those who mocked him as a hypocrite, remained to pray when once they came under his influence; and those who refused the good and chose the evil, fled away from his presence as from some avenging angel.

On The Scarth, where the poor of Farbiggin congregated, his word was law, and his prayers were considered more than apostolic; and though the roughest were unable to abstain from scoffing and scorning a control which they could neither understand nor ignore, they were the first to feel that God himself would have been in some way to blame if "Auld Geordie's" prayers had not received a fair hearing.

Many a wife had brought a worthless husband and many a father a hopeless son to him for reprimand or correction.

With all women, whether of the aristocracy or of The Scarth, he was deferential and ceremonious, but his few enemies scoffingly declared that he was unduly influenced in his opinions regarding them, according to the proportion of beauty or grace accorded. But pure he was with all the chivalrous purity of an old-world knight, and young men and maidens consulted him in half-sentences and mumbled phrases as they stood awkwardly before him; and many a heartbreak and many a life's misery and shipwreck he had obviated by advice, which had for its rock foundation the fear of God and a certain far-seeing astuteness.

Mary acted as his useful aide-de-camp, and now that physical infirmity had linked her more really with those who suffered than with those who rejoiced, the poor were beginning to think that they got almost as much good from Miss Mary;

and she was thus enabled to pass on shrewd advice, carefully hidden away under good-natured raillery, with an authority which, though first gained from her position as her father's daughter, was gradually becoming indissolubly connected with herself. And then Mary had a keen sense of humour, and her father had none—and therein lay an immensity of difference.

"Then if you are not coming in to tea, I think I shall try to go to the Vicarage, father," said Mary, as Mr. Glyn was preparing to leave.

"Do, dear," he said. "Will you order the carriage? Ah, I forgot to tell you that I have had a new arrangement of cushions put into the seat. I hope they will help you, my darling."

He looked at her with a wistful yearning that brought tears into her large brown eyes.

Mary forced them back, and putting up her arms drew his face down to hers. Then she pushed him away from her, and laughing brightly, said, "Oh, father darling, you should not do these things. You are always plotting for my comfort. Why, what would you give me next?"

"All the strength I have left in my own strong back if it would serve you, dearest," he replied gently. "There, now I have made you cry. I am sorry—good-bye." And he hurriedly left the room.

Later in the afternoon George Glyn made his way up on to The Scarth. The way was truly upwards, and the tangled mass of irregular buildings was perched upon the steep hillside at every conceivable angle. Some houses were very low, others very high; some were clean and had been recently rebuilt; others were in the last stages of decrepitude.

Neither plan nor system had had any place in the arrangement of this quarter of the town.

As a matter of ancient history, the whole of the land had once been more or less common property. Squatters had built as they chose, and had gained rights through long periods of non-disturbance.

Later, the lands had been acquired by Act of Parliament, and

were placed in the hands of a certain body of trustees, who were apparently more distinguished for their short-sightedness, prejudice, and huge magnification of their office, combined with a subservient subordination to each other, than for any particular faculty for trusteeship.

They sold a site here, and a site there, as a purchaser turned up, and therefore left themselves with all kinds of odd, irregular scraps of land of little use to any one, which, with a reserve price or an impossible building clause evolved by themselves, they pathetically put up to auction time after time without result.

These Scarthside Trustees had quite unique ways of interfering with and worrying their tenants and those connected with them, and at last had gained that summit of success which is sometimes granted to the hopelessly incorrigible; and this success was set forth by a saying in Farbiggin that "Yan might do summat wi't Corporation, but yan could do nowt at a' wi' t' Scarthside Trustees."

No one in earlier days had had the genius to perceive that a veritable Garden of the Lord might have been constructed on The Scarth.

The town straggled along the valley beneath, hugging the river and the fog; but across the smoke, and beyond the eastern suburbs, stretched the wide cultivated country, whilst beyond lay the hills and the wild Moorshire valleys, which wandered away in a northerly direction.

If any ideal had been conceived and carried out, many a cottager might have daily enjoyed some of this loveliness.

Day by day the wind and the clouds and the mists and the sun played on the distances with entrancing changeability, as if appealing to one generation after another for sympathy and admiration.

True, there were some houses which were by chance built facing the view, but for the most part they were turned backwards and sideways, and all for the want of a mere twist round; the small-paned windows and the narrow doors faced other windows and other doors, and ashpits and dirty lanes and

middensteads, and the fresh air of heaven was choked by the smell of refuse and filth of every description.

The windings of the ways in amongst these dwellings were wonderful, and it needed a native or an indefatigable district worker to know their idiosyncrasies.

All the dwellers on The Scarth were as proud of themselves as they were despised by the working classes living in other parts of Farbiggin. The name Scarthsider was at once a reproach and a glory.

In the early part of the century, even as late as the forties and fifties, no policeman dared venture alone to quell any disturbance in this district. Fights, quarrels, family feuds went on for the most part quite unchecked.

Sunday by Sunday the boys and girls looked on with respectful admiration at the bloody fights which took place at the popular fighting-ground outside the Wild Boar Inn, the boys longing for the time when they could show like prowess, and the girls preparing for equal valour on their own doorsteps.

None interfered, except the police; but fines and imprisonments did very little to curb the lawless tendency.

Away on the heights above The Scarth, from whence the glories of the Lake Mountains and the calmer beauties of the Morecambe Bay could alike be seen, gambling and coursing were carried on with assiduity. Gradually, however, a feeling of some sort of responsibility entered into the hearts of the Farbiggin people.

George Glyn established a mission school, and sought to gather in the wanderers. A few cottages were thrust aside, and a small church was perched on one of the very steepest parts of the hill. A general taming process was established, and later, Methodists and Salvationists felt that amongst the Scarthsiders there was at any rate an open harvestfield.

With such efforts came the inevitable result of pauperization, and on the day when Mr. George Glyn picked his way with a certain fastidious delicacy up through the steep, muddy, refuse-bespattered lanes, the inhabitants were divided into those who had sunk into an insolent laziness of expectancy, and those

who had retained the old independent hatred of interference from others. But through both classes ran the same uncontrolledness and want of self-government which caused them, time after time, to turn again and rend their most indulgent benefactors on the slightest possible provocation.

Happily a deep-seated sense of rough justice lay dormant, and the "renders" were often the very first to turn round and sturdily support those whom they had but a few hours before as sturdily abused.

Thus it was that the meek and easily alarmed workers turned back and were seen no more on The Scarth; but others of a less sensitive nature endured the rough abuse for the sake of the rough loyalty, and in their battles with the people for their own good, enjoyed a fray which was fraught with so much real humanity and original humour.

Mr. Glyn knocked at the door of a particularly old-fashioned but superior-looking dwelling on The Scarth.

In times gone by the house had stood somewhat alone, and even now a small garden separated it off in such a way as to give it a distinct individuality, and the name of "The Great House" or, in the phraseology of the district, "T' Girt Hoose," still bore testimony to days of bygone importance and comparative splendour.

The door was very wide and thickly studded with square nails, and the mullioned windows were leaded and diamond-paned. The whole aspect of the house showed there was no stint in the up-keep, and the date of 1637 was cut in the rough limestone over the porch.

All around the cottages had established themselves, but from the front windows of the Great House there was a clear unbroken view of the distant fell lands.

The moving of John Carradus into this house some thirty years ago was considered by the neighbours to be something of an impertinence, and they said amongst themselves what they dared not have said to Carradus, that "Jack Carradus hed a girt cheek to set his sell oop in a hoose like yon."

As Carradus cared not the value of his own clay pipe for

what any one said about him the gossip died a natural death, and so it came to pass that John Carradus and his connection with the Great House was soon part of the established order of things, and in a few years most people had forgotten that "Jacky" had lived in any other place.

And to-day every one on The Scarth knew that the old man was near his end.

CHAPTER II

Mr. Glyn was kept waiting a few moments after he had knocked; but he was not of an impatient temperament, so he occupied the time by inquiring after the families of several small children who stood in the middle of the lane watching for the door to open, so that they might catch a glimpse inside, The house of death was always intensely interesting to a Scarthsider.

At last the door was opened slowly by a stout middle-aged woman, whom Mr. Glyn greeted pleasantly.

"Coom in, sir!" she said, in a clear, strong voice which could be heard all over the house. "Coom in, sir. He's reet doon bad now, and that awk'ard to do wi'! I'se niver doin' t' reet thing. I do me best, and folk can't do more!"

"Perhaps I had better see him at once," was the reply, for Mr. Glyn knew the woman well.

"Aye, he's all on t' fidge for yer!" Then dropping her voice she whispered, "Lawyer! you'll put in a word for me as hes nursed him sa lang? I kna' I'se nowt tull him by blood, but he hes a deal o' brass, and he'se niver miss it whar he's goin' tull!"

"I think, Mrs. Lancaster, that I will go right in," and Mr. Glyn stepped quietly past her into the large, airy bedroom which was on the ground-floor.

John Carradus was lying on an old-fashioned wooden four-post bed, in such a position that he could see the distant fells

through the window, and an old white bulldog lay curled up at his feet. All about him was clean, but excessively homely. The floor was carpetless, but the oaken boards were spotlessly scrubbed. Above the high oak wainscoting, the walls were covered with pink rosebuds and blue violets in alternating bunches, and suspended in narrow black frames was a unique collection of plans and pictures of old Farbiggin, some of them being of great antiquity.

There were a few prints about, but these were all of sporting dogs—greyhounds, terriers, and evil-looking mongrels; and just above one picture of a prize bulldog with a fully developed under-lip there was a card on which was painted by some very unskilled hand the words, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

The only other thing of interest in the room, beside perhaps the simple oaken mantelshelf, was a small square cupboard let into the wall between the fireplace and the bed. It was not more than a couple of feet square, but the door was most beautifully carved with an interlacing conventional design, and the centre bore the same date as the front of the house.

"So you've coomed!" said he shortly. "It's time!"

Mr. Glyn sat down by the bed. "Yes, I've come, John. Now let us get to business."

The old man turned on the bed, and brought forth from under his pillow a small key. Mr. Glyn opened the cupboard, and drew out an assortment of papers.

"You'll find out by them how much I hev, Lawyer! I've telt you before partly what there is, but there's a deal more than you think on for. Nobbut a lile matter o' £100,000 in land and in Sowerby' Bank, and that's reckoning nowt at a' for t' Rope Walk!" John Carradus lay back and watched to see the effect of the announcement on his lawyer.

George Glyn, however, made no movement of surprise, but lightly bending his head in acknowledgment that he had heard, waited quietly for more as he fingered the documents before him.

"No, don't you speak, George," continued the man; "I'se

best get it a' said. It's a job talking when—" and he was interrupted by a violent fit of coughing.

Bell Lancaster opened the door.

"Shut yon door and be off, thoo pryin' auld lass!" he burst forth, and the door was shut promptly.

"Furst of a'," he began again, "I want you to set down t' Rope Walk and all yon business wi a couple o' thousand to our William' lad Jo. William and his eldest Reuben can look after their awn sells. They are on t' reet road tull a fortune wi' t' corn mill, but his second lad Joe hes stuck tull his grandfather at t' rope spinnin' and he shall hev it. And think on that you set down, that efter him it mun gang tull his lile Jack. Jack's a girt strang lad. He teks efter his girt grandfather!"

Mr. Glyn looked up at the wasted hollow-eyed man before him, and then remembered bygone days when John Carradus was in truth the halest, hardest man on The Scarth.

"Jack teks tull his auld grandfather and a'," he continued, half proudly and half deprecatingly. "He did yon by his sell last Cirsmus!" and he pointed to the text on the wall. "His father and oor William's baith on em religious—ower religious for to suit me, but it suits them, and does naábody na hurt."

"Then shall I tie up the business to be conducted for the benefit of the little boy?" queried the lawyer.

"Eye! Tie it up tight, and put plenty o' rope on tull it: but let Jo hev t' profit while Jack is yan and twenty, and then they mun share equal while Jo dies, and then Jack can hev t' lot."

"I understand," replied Mr. Glyn, making rapid notes. "And now for the rest of the moneys?"

"You'll mind our Dick?" asked Carradus—"him as niver stuck tull his father, but went off musickin' to Germany when he was nobbut a growin' lad?"

Mr. Glyn bent his head. He still remembered the handsome lad with his air of unusual intellectual refinement, which had caused nothing but annoyance to his rougher-natured father.

"But you'll niver have heard wha he got hissell wed tull?"

"No," was the short reply.

"Well, he wed Robert Whinery' dawghter! Theer!" he cried triumphantly, as Mr. Glyn started, "I'se surprised even a lawyer! Eye, Bob Whinery' dawghter, I turned t' lad off for his impidence, and he's niver getten a penny piece from ma sen t' last wage I gev him t' day he set off unbeknownst to ma on his divilment: and Bob Whinery—Sir Robert Whinery, High Sheriff o' t' County o' Moorshire—him as ruined hisself and died in London three year sen—he turned his dawghter off when she wedt a fiddling chap in Germany! All t' county wondered what sooart of a fule she hed sattled on, and they heard tell it was one as went by t' name o' Dick Hilliard, and so thowght Bob hissell, but I kent it! I kent as our Dick was mate to Bob Whinery' dawghter! Look theer in yon thin envelope—you'll find t' letter he sent ma!"

Mr. Glyn opened the one referred to, and read slowly:

"DEAR FATHER,—I am very sorry you can do nothing for me, for I know that you are comfortably off, and I am not specially wealthy. Still I am getting on well for a musician, and this letter is to tell you I have just married Beatrice Whinery, daughter of Sir Robert Whinery of Witherthwaite. I hope that we shall have a long, happy life before us, and may God grant the same to you. Remember, father, that I am still a Farbiggin man. I love every stick and stone of the place, but I cannot leave the music, I cannot indeed.

"Give my love to mother and tell her not to fret. I should like her to see my beautiful lady. I am known here only as Mr. Hilliard, and even my wife has told no one my real name. She has been very badly used by her family, and I trust that you will keep my secret.

"Your affectionate son,

"RICHARD CARRADUS."

Mr. Glyn laid the letter down.

"And you'll find two more, and them's t' lot!"

In the same handwriting, dated from the Conservatoire at

Weimar and written some fifteen years later, was another letter:

"DEAR FATHER,—You will be sorry to hear that I am stricken for death. Consumption they say. I shall leave my wife and one little lass to struggle along alone. May God help them.

Goodbye, father. William wrote to tell me that mother was dead, so though I cannot write to her, I shall soon see her for myself.

"Your affectionate son,

"RICHARD CARRADUS."

The remaining letter was written in a woman's hand:

"To Mr. John Carradus,

"DEAR SIR,—You are my husband's father, and he has been a true husband to me. He is gone now, and he has asked me to let you know. Our daughter is twelve years old, and we shall stay out here, as I have an opening for teaching.

"The address, Mrs. Hilliard, Musik Schule, Weimar, will always find me.

"Yours sincerely,

"BEATRICE CARRADUS."

"And she—Mrs. Richard Carradus—is she still living?"

"No, she's dead and a'. Dead this short time sen. It was in t' paper. I don't kna' wha set it theer."

"And I suppose you sent her, from time to time, some assistance?"

"Niver a brass fardin'!" returned the old man violently. "Was I, think you, goin' to kep Bob Whinery' dawghter and him keepin' his carriage and pair, and drivin' through t' toon as if all t' spot belenged tull him when ivery man Jack kent as he'd coo to smash soom day? Eh! many and many a time as I'se seed him I'se thowght, 'Eh, Bob lad! thee and me is grandfather tull t' saám lass.' Eh man! but he wad

ha' bin mad, if he'd only ha' kent it!" And Carradus chuckled hoarsely.

"And the poor little girl, your granddaughter?"

"She's nin sic a lile un! She'll be twenty year old come Whisuntid, and she'll be nin sa poor wi £100,000 behint her!"

"Then you intend to leave the rest of your money to this child, Eleanor Carradus, I understand?"

"Ivery hawpenny. Eh, ivery hawpenny! Eh! Bob Whinery wad ha' bin' that riled he'd 'a' hed a job to sit his mare! He wad 'a' given summut for £100,000! He was short enough o' brass, as a' t' warld kent. Coom, set it doon man!"

Mr. Glyn made a few notes and again looked up. "To the daughter absolutely, or tied up with trustees?"

"Geordie Glyn, you're an honest man! I want to leave ivery fardin' to you for t' lass, and I'se tak it as a girt favour if you'll be her trustee and guardian—you and Miss Mary. She could bide wi' you while she weds. Set doon a couple o' hundreds a year for Miss Mary for tekkin' a' t' fash!"

Mr. Glyn was about to interpose, but the old man waxed rate.

"Niver a word! Niver a word! You're here to do as I tell you. What! I'se willin' to pay for t' job!"

"You know, John," said Mr. Glyn, taking not the least notice of the manifest ill-humour of his client, "you cannot force any one to assume guardianship."

Carradus recovered himself somewhat, and said earnestly, "But you will do it, Mr. Glyn, you will? I wad like t' lass to live wi' a lady. Her mother was a lady, and her father—well, he was on t' rooad to bein' a gentleman. Any way, he was honest!"

Mr. Glyn was sufficient student of character to note the struggle that was going on in the old man's heart, between the long-nursed wrath against this son and a pride which was making him do some sort of tardy justice to his granddaughter.

"Eh, Mr. Glyn, tek' her and do t' best you can for her! T' auld woman 'ull rest better in her grave happen, if she kens

as our Dick' lass is gaain' i' silk and satin oop and doon t' streets o' Farbiggin. Eh, t' auld body was tekken wi' a bit o' finery. If you think as £200 a year is over little for Miss Mary——

"It is not the question of money, as you know perfectly well," said Mr. Glyn. It struck him as odd that he should be bargaining in this way with a Scarthsider.

"Aye, George! I kna' as you hev plenty, but business is business, and I'd like my £100,000 to stick to t' lass, and I would gang oot o' t' warld a deal contenteder if theer was some one to mind t' brass for her. £100,000! And I'se niver spent a fardin' o' yon brass. T' furst start on it cam fra my Liverpool brothers as med their fortunes in t' wool buyin' and I've let it graw and graw these thirty year. I've getten' a goodish bit o' land cheap when it was put oop, and many a do wi' them auld Scarthside trustees I've hed ower it, and now half o' t' Scarth belengs tull auld Jack Carradus, and what I med out on it I put straight intull Sowerby' Bank, and theer it mun bide!"

"But, John, you would hardly leave all this money in a local bank?" Mr. Glyn's business instincts were shocked at such an idea.

"I kna' weel enough as auld Sowerby gives little enough for it. He's a close enough chap is Sowerby. But t' auld feller is straight, and he's theer, and you can see his land by many an acre. He's hed my brass safe for thirty year, and he shall hev it to t' finish. I'se hev no investin' and lossin' and company mekkin' wi' my brass. T' brass as will come in from t' rents and t' interest from Sowerby's 'ull be enough for any lass. Any road, that's what I want you to set down. And you'll let t' lass bide wi' you!"

"On that point I shall do nothing until I have first consulted my daughter," was the reply. "But, John, surely you have forgotten your other daughter? You will not leave her penniless when there is so much?"

Mr. Glyn was not prepared for the excitement which his words instantly produced. Carradus's countenance waxed

almost devilish in expression, and he clenched his fists together.

"Another dawghter? D—n her!" and here followed a volley of oaths. "Yes, you're reet, I've a dawghter. A bonny dawghter! A dawghter as lives not fifty yard off. A dawghter wi' four childer livin' and naábody knaws how many buried, and ivery yan on 'em wi' a different father tull 'em. My dawghter git a sixpence? Niver! Whar did she larn them ways, I exe you? Did her mother, who's heart she vara near brak', larn her them? Did her father? No, George Glyn. Sen t' furst time I kent as our Maria hed disgraced hersell I was done wi' her! She could gang tull others fer her keep. Yon biggest lass of hers—what t' folk call Nell Carradus—will be just sic another as her mother!"

Mr. Glyn knew well the fine, handsome girl referred to. She was one of his troubles at the Sunday school, but was the acknowledged beauty of the district—being known among her companions at the tobacco factory by the soubriquet of "T' 'Bacca Queen."

"But, John, you are soon done with life, and you remember the word is, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us,' and possibly you were not quite guiltless. Did you really do all you could to protect your child? I think I remember that she was broken-hearted when you sent her brother off. How the poor child cried! Perhaps if——"

"I tell you I won't do aught for her or hers. They hev disgraced me, and if I telt you wha Nell's father was, happen you'd jump t' same as you did a while sen!"

But Mr. Glyn had no desire needlessly to gratify his client, and was at the moment more interested in seeking to stop an injustice being done.

"But still, I may put down a legacy or a small annuity? Think, John, what your wife would have advised had she been here."

"I'll nut leave Maria nor any of hers one d—ned farthing, so that's t' finish!"

The door opened, and Bell Lancaster in a deprecating voice announced "T' Doctor."

Mr. Glyn rose as Dr. Maddison entered the room, and after shaking hands, began gathering up his papers.

"Hullo, doctor, sit yersell doon! You'd best mek' t' maist o' yer time. You can coom as often as you hev a mind now—I'se nut begrudge you t' hawf-croon. You've little enough time left fer addlin' yer brass oot o' Jack Carradus!"

The doctor raised his eyebrows, and a half-smile passed over his face as he caught the lawyer's eye. He turned to the patient and said pleasantly, with a certain strong Moorshire accent which he adopted instinctively when talking to his farming and working-class patients—

"Why, John, my lad, what have you been doing this afternoon? You are quite hot and red! I've not seen you with such a colour for a good bit now. Mr. Glyn makes a better doctor than I do, I think."

"Me and him hes been hevin' words!" said Carradus shortly.

"Ah!" ejaculated the doctor significantly.

"I think," said Mr. Glyn, "I will leave you now. I understand your wishes, John, and I will call in again as soon as possible."

"A' reet. I'se best put me hand tull it as soon as may be!" and he placed his thin white fingers in the firm brown palm of the lawyer.

Mr. Glyn departed, and refused to enter into any conversation with Bell Lancaster, who waylaid him, longing to inquire what had passed.

Even Bella Lancaster was, however, unequal to the task of storming the reserve of George Glyn when he was in a business mood.

CHAPTER III

Why do the flowers bloom!
Why does the sunset smile?
Let me in solitude, shadow, and gloom
Rest awhile.

Rest from this joy of life,
Reckless profusion's wealth,
Glamour of sunshine and flowery strife,
Laughing health.

Tempest winds swept my soul,
Lashing its restless sea.
Passed—yet the surging wave-echoes still roll
Sullenly.

Daisies and sunlit plain,
Live in your summer hour,
Live—till you lure me to gladness again
By your power.

It was always a pleasure and refreshment to Mary Glyn to pay a call at the Vicarage.

There were few places where she felt sufficiently at home to bring her invalidism with her, but the kindly, cordial atmosphere which prevailed in that easy-going old house was at once a tonic and a rest.

Perhaps rest is not quite the right word. There were times when the very last thing on earth Mary yearned after was rest.

Yet if she looked wan and thin, if a dark, tired expression came into her eyes, overwhelming the brightness which was generally to be found there, her friends would say decidedly, "You really ought to rest more. You tire yourself."

These busy, active friends, with all their innumerable petty interests, their gossips, and their businesses, were glad that they could tell her to rest. They felt the need of a subsiding peace themselves, and were glad that they could honestly tell Mary that she was quite justified in indulging in what they would have described as a period of idleness.

Mary smiled back cheerily enough, but when they had gone about their business a dull sense of immeasurable tedium would pass over her as she lay back, too tired even to read or knit. Every one about her united in saving her strength, and Mary fully appreciated all the consideration she received—yet, oh for a long walk away by herself amongst the fells; for a scramble amidst the rough stones and the parsley fern and the stagshorn moss; for a ride down to the shining sea; for a hot, panting game of tennis, or even for strength to do a little every-day shopping, to take a letter to the post herself, or to bring back a book from the library!

People said it was certainly a great pity about Miss Glyn, but that it was a mercy she had such a very cheerful temperament. In fact, many were of the opinion that she did not really suffer as much as was at first given out, and that it must be a distinct comfort to any one to have so much time in which to do exactly as she liked, and to remain untroubled by committees, working-parties, call-making, and drawing-room meetings. No, Miss Glyn was not badly circumstanced, for did she not live in one of the most charmingly furnished houses in Farbiggin? and her ponies were certainly the smartest in the county; and then, of course, she was used to it now.

Perhaps Mary's sister-in-law, Catherine, the Vicar's wife, came the nearest to understanding how things were, and there were times now and again when she caught a glimpse of soul distress which sent her away home to her husband and children with a weight on her own heart.

She was only a young wife when the accident happened, and with a motherly tenderness she had helped and supported her sister-in-law through those first months of weary suspense when girlhood's strength and permanent weakness lay in the balance.

One bright summer day the London specialist came down for his final visit. After the usual examination, the usual number of questions were asked, and the usual subdued consultation took place in another room.

Dr. Maddison and the specialist conversed for some time in

the library, into which they finally called Mr. Glyn, who had been hovering round in helpless anxiety.

Then Mr. Glyn called Catherine aside for a few moments, and soon afterwards the specialist came in and wished good-bye to Mary in the cheerful manner which he assumed on all painful occasions.

Still, Mary was not deceived, though she dared not ask the question. She merely lay back quietly on the couch with her fingers resting on the unread pages of the book on her knee.

It was Catherine who in that darkest hour of all came to her young sister-in-law and told her the truth—the bare, fatal truth.

It was with her arms round Catherine's neck, that Mary at last gave way to her long pent-up, but now quite uncontrollable emotion.

It was Catherine who first let her weep herself out, and who then soothed her and loved her back to peace.

And that very day Mary's strong, brave heart took up the burden of life which she never again let fall, though at times it drooped heavily in her tired arms.

Her first desire was to comfort her father, and one look at his worn, weary countenance caused her to bring forth her old happy smile again, as she said cheerfully, "Good-night, father dearest. Sleep well. It is all over now, and I am so very glad to really know. You and I shall always be together now, and you will be my greatest help;" and then as she saw that there was no answering brightness in her father's face she added, "And, you know, father, after all, what does it matter? It is only such a 'little while.'"

But alone in her room, Mary repeated the last words in a sort of dull anguish. "A little while, O God! I said a little while, and it is all my life—my life. All my life to have this pain, this weakness in me—in me myself. And I am only nineteen, dear Lord."

And the Lord, in His pity, gave unto His beloved sleep.

But for her father there was no sleep that night. He knelt

in agony praying the prayer of the world's great mystery, "If it be possible, let this cup pass."

And again the answer came, as of old, that it was not "possible." Fifteen years before, he had prayed that prayer with a like grief clutching at his heart, when his young wife lay wrestling with death for the sake of a new tender life for which she had lived and laboured. She held the grim autocrat at bay until her little son lay sleeping peacefully at her side. Then with a smile, triumphant in weakness, she placed her hand in that of her husband and passed from the darkness of pain into the sunlight of the presence of God.

And now on this summer night the pathos of life in general and a strong self-pity seized the man. He became weak as a weary child.

His short married life had been one of exceptional happiness, and the madness of solitude was proportionately great. Gradually this only daughter had grown up into his heart, filling the void in his life, and a new happiness which his two boys had failed to awaken came upon him through the influence of the bright, active, eager girl at his side.

And now for a second time the waves and billows passed over him, and there was no respite in the roaring. The heavens were black and the earth was blacker, and the stars had forgotten to shine. Yet all Mr. Glyn could do was to cry out helplessly that the burden might be taken from the young and laid upon the old.

But the summer night passed, and the sun awakened the earth to new life, and there was no answer to his prayer, but the Lord looked down upon the sleeping girl and the man in his agony, and still pursued His inscrutable way.

And now after ten years Mary still lived on, still carried her burdened life, but the power of God had visited her and she was strong with the strength which victory over strife alone vouchsafes.

And on this bright afternoon, as soon as her father had left her to go to his office Mary rang the bell.

The man-servant appeared. He was not exactly a butler,

for there was no wine in the house, nor a footman, but held a generally useful position, some part of his duty being to carry his mistress up and down stairs, or into the garden and wherever else she desired to go.

"Will you ask Madge to come down, Jacobs? I want the carriage at once, as I am going a short drive. You need not make tea to-day, as I shall stay at the Vicarage and the master is going out. But dinner will be as usual."

The man left the room, and Madge soon appeared.

Madge was well on in years, having nursed Mary from babyhood, and after the accident she became her devoted attendant.

Mr. Glyn had offered his daughter other more cultured companionship, but she had preferred the kindly working-class woman to any with whom she might have felt less freedom.

Madge, on her part, thought "for ever" of her charge, and was always fond of proclaiming her virtues and what she might have been if she had been strong—and she even knew whom Miss Mary might have married. In times of special weakness and pain she petted, soothed, and mothered Mary and called her "her own lamb"; and Mary felt a comfortable sense of protection and privacy in her presence which she greatly valued.

Madge was an admitted personage wherever Mary visited. She did any needful services that might be required, and then retired in some amount of state to the servants, who treated her with a respect which her age and her well-to-do appearance demanded.

Mary repeated the programme she had arranged, and in a short time she and Madge were driving along the pleasant roads under the smile of the brilliant spring sky.

As they passed through the streets of the town it was wonderful to notice how many persons smiled and bowed, or raised their hats to Mary.

She always looked out eagerly for familiar faces, for she had too kind a heart and was possibly too worldly wise to cut or disdain any. People—all sorts and conditions of people, interested Mary intensely. She was always watching and

learning, and thinking out character, and she keenly enjoyed idiosyncrasies and inconsistencies and foibles.

Mary, it must be confessed, was something of a caricaturist, and amongst her own family she would now and again exercise her art, and the Vicarage children especially liked nothing better than to get Aunt Mary "on."

Through being spared the least spark of jealousy in her nature, and being moreover thrown by her infirmity out of the running in this world's petty competition for popularity or success, she was able to look with impartial eyes at the many social situations which came within her ken—for social politics seethed on all sides.

Though she herself called at few places, every one called on her, and it seemed as though each caller confided his or her news and every pet grievance to her willing self.

Mary was, however, no mischief-maker. She had learnt some lessons earlier regarding the dangers connected with passing on information about others for the sake of the mere pleasure of doing so. She had grown wary, and though now and then she was caught out, she for the most part sought to preserve an honourable reserve about other people's affairs.

Mary was often guilty of laughing to herself afterwards, when she had vanquished some gossip-monger by means of her impenetrable innocence or ignorance—the said gossip-monger could not tell which.

"I won't be a medium," she declared. "People can tell each other what they want them to know, but I won't be the one to pass scandal on!" As it often happened that several callers arrived at the same hour, Mary heard plenty of general gossip; but though she put in a word now and again to protect a reputation, or set right some obvious exaggeration, she never pleaded special knowledge, and though every one was aware in a general way that Miss Glyn knew everything, they each felt her to be a personal confidant.

About four o'clock the carriage arrived at the Vicarage gate. Its arrival was the signal for a general stampede from within.

"Aunty Mary, Aunty Mary—oh you angel!" cried Rob, an

eager-faced girl who was the first to reach the carriage door. "Here you are! Come at last! You have not been for a week!"

"Don't, Rob," said a tall, quiet girl of about fifteen, "don't be so rough!"

Aunty Mary was, however, ready for anything, and smiled and nodded and tried to shake hands with four pairs of hands at once.

"Mother is out. She said she would be in at four, but she won't. She never is in at the time she says," volunteered Polly, who was Mary's namesake.

"But we can give you tea!" said Rob joyfully.

The young groom was by this time standing by the ponies, and Sybil, a small important personage of six, was already demanding to be lifted up to stroke the glossy necks of the beautifully kept animals.

Johnson, the coachman, carried Mary up the short gravelled walk into the house and laid her carefully down on the sofa, which was always ready for her.

Madge settled her comfortably and then withdrew.

The Rev. Edward Glyn and his wife rejoiced in a family of five girls.

Maud was the eldest. Then came Polly, aged thirteen, who was an individual of considerable ability, and was possessed of a somewhat cynical temperament. She had strong aptitude for investigating and getting to the bottom of things, and was decidedly opinionated.

Roberta, or Rob, as she had dubbed herself, was eleven. Then came Sybil, aged six, and lastly two-year-old Catherine, who at present answered to the name of Kat.

Maud was fast growing up into a really sweet-looking girl. There was nothing brilliant about her, but she had clear grey eyes, a broad forehead framed in a mass of rippling brown hair, and her general expression was both intelligent and thoughtful. She at once took up the *rôle* of hostess in the absence of her mother, and as soon as she had seen that her aunt was happily placed, she rang the bell for tea.

Afternoon tea at the Vicarage was a particularly social institution, especially when there was only a family party, but a certain simplicity of manner and unconscious ease made even the stiffest callers relax to a cordiality at which they were afterwards surprised when considering the event afterwards.

"Where is your father?" asked Mary, as she watched Maud light the spirit lamp under the bright kettle.

"Oh, dad is out, wandering round finding mother, I expect!" Maud, and in fact all the children, were well aware of the lover-like devotion of their parents.

The door opened, and Rob and Sybil burst into the room.

"Ah, that's right!" cried Rob, as she saw the tea—"Oh I say, Aunty Mary, what jolly cushions you have got in the carriage!"

"Yes," cried Sybil excitedly, coming close up to the couch and speaking with her small face close up to Mary's—"Yes, they are lovely! I jumped up and down and up and down on them, and the more I jumped, the more they jumped back at me!"

Mary laughed and said enthusiastically, "Did they really! Well, you know, I believe that those cushions were bought from a gentleman named Mr. John-in-the-Box, and——"

"Don't be silly, Aunt Mary!" interrupted Sybil, who hated to think that any one was smiling at her.

"Sybil, you ought not to call Aunty Mary silly, it's rude!" said Maud, in a reproving voice.

"No, of course not!" chimed in Rob, "what ever you may think, you know!"

Sybil was not, however, in the least abashed, and returned to the charge.

"And who gave you those cushions?"

"Grandfather!"

"I guessed he did!" cried Rob. "He is sweet. Do you know I heard Jane say in the kitchen that grandpapa was quite the sweetest man she had ever set eyes on!"

"Toast?" inquired Polly of Mary as she handed her a plate of the hot buttered delicacy.

"Of course!" she replied. "Do you know, girls, I should like to tell you a great secret!"

All four looked up eagerly, but there was unbelief as to the greatness of the coming communication written large on Polly's face.

"Our toast at home is simply horrid!"

"Is it?" said Sybil; and dropping her voice she whispered, "And do you EAT it?"

"Sometimes!"

"And what do you do when you don't eat it?"

"I give it to Vixen!"

"And does she eat it?" again asked Sybil, her eyes widening, for she loved to make anything into a story.

"Generally; but one day——"

"Well?" Sybil was so near now that the soft yellow curls were resting on Mary's shoulder.

"One day she left a piece on the floor, and——"

"And?"

"Jacobs came in and found it!"

"Oh!" they all exclaimed, aghast.

"But what did he DO?" said Sybil—"you haven't finished."

"Well, first he looked at it very solemnly, and then——"

"Then?"

"Then he picked it up and put it on the salver and carried it away!"

"Do you know, Aunty Mary," remarked Polly, "it does seem to me a little strange that you should not have nice toast when you want it!"

"It does!"

"Can't you screw yourself up to ask?" suggested Maud.

"My beloved child, I have been screwing myself up for weeks to the point of suggesting an improvement to Jacobs."

"You are short of moral courage?" said Polly sententiously.

"Exactly, my dear infant."

"Now, if I were you," said Rob earnestly, considering the situation, "I should go about the business like this. Just

begin by saying to Jacobs this very day when you get home, 'Jacobs, I have enjoyed my tea at the Vicarage, and the toast was perfectly delicious!' and then you might wonder to him where we get our bread from, and the butter you know!"

"Of course," said Maud wisely, "it is not Jacobs who makes the toast!"

"But he bears rule in the lower regions!" said Mary.

"Well, you just have a little confidential chat with him," advised Rob, "that is how I do when I want things. When I want scones, for instance, I ask right out; but if Martha is grumpy I go away, and then come back in a minute and say, 'Oh, Martha, I saw James Martin this afternoon, and I do believe he is the handsomest man I ever saw!' That generally fetches her; but if not, then I tell her that she herself is awfully nice-looking, you know. I almost think that pays the best."

Mary laughed, and the happiness on her face remained as she looked up to see her brother and sister enter the room.

CHAPTER IV

"HULLO! Here are dad and mother!" cried Sybil, rushing forward.

"Come along!" cried Rob. "We are all friends—no proper callers to-day, nobody but Aunty Mary. That is a blessing!"

Henry Glyn somewhat resembled his father in build, having the same slight figure, but his masses of dark, wavy hair showed as yet no sign of grey.

"Come along, dad, and have some tea; and did you find mother?" asked Maud.

"Of course he did, silly!" said Polly.

"Oh yes, I found her. She was busy bargaining over fruit trees at Fell's and falling in love with that young Fleming they have there." And he looked at his wife quizzically.

"Now, Mary," said Catherine, "don't listen to him; you know we must have more trees. We have room, and it is a pity for the ground to be wasted, for trees grow while you sleep."

"Of course you can't plant fruit trees in May, can you mother?" asked Polly.

"Mother likes to be in time, Polly," said her father.

"Now, Harry, I won't have it," said Catherine; "you know you are simply trying to give Mary a wrong impression and make her think that I am extravagant, and I'm not!"

"You see," broke in Rob, "mother is excellent at bargains. She buys all kinds of lovely things—awfully cheap, you know. We should never have thought that we wanted them, but mother is always thinking, and when the things come we all rejoice!"

"And dad, he smiles sometimes," said Polly.

"And," said Rob, in a stage whisper, "what do you think mother does when father smiles?"

"Can't imagine!"

"Well—she pouts!"

This discussion of their characteristics by the children did not seem to strike the parents as at all odd. Perhaps the quiet, even rule which the children were fully alive to, made it possible to allow a degree of familiarity which parents without this safeguard would have been alarmed at. Besides, the children knew exactly how far they might venture. The hand was held very lightly on the rein, but the hand was there and the children knew it.

"Father is out this afternoon," said Mary, "so I am having a little jaunt!"

"Your jaunt is a very great pleasure to us," said her brother politely.

"You are perfectly right, father!" put in Polly.

"When does Ryder return?" asked the Vicar; "he seems to have been away a very long time."

"Probably next week. Yes, I do miss him. Father is always more cheerful when his beloved son is at home. He

pretends that he is complete with me, but I know he likes having Ryder with him at the office. Besides, I cannot always find enough conversation when I am shut up so much."

"No," said Catherine, "Ryder brings you all the gossip! No, don't deny it, Mary!"

"Am I attempting to do so?" was the prompt reply.

"Uncle Ryder is grand at gossip," said Polly. "You don't think he knows anything, but he does. I don't suppose that a cat ever makes plans to catch a mouse in Farbiggin, but that Uncle Ryder knows the plot from the very beginning!"

"Polly!" remonstrated her mother, laughing.

"I think," said Maud, "that Uncle Ryder is far too absent-minded to consider other people's mouse hunts: why, he can't even remember his own umbrella, it has been here for weeks!"

"It is a blessing for you that he never married, Aunty Mary," remarked Rob.

"And why?"

"Oh, you see he would tell his wife the things instead of you! A married man is no good to a sister. Just think what heaps of things father tells mother that he would never think of telling us—or you, you know!"

"How do you know he does not tell me?" asked Mary.

"Well, does he?" was the retort, and Mary was silenced.

Sybil was earnestly listening to the conversation as was her wont, and remarked drily, "Ah, well, I shouldn't mind marrying Uncle Ryder myself. I don't suppose that any man I can get hold of will ever be as nice." And she sighed. She looked so unconsciously sweet and passive that Mary could not help giving her an affectionate embrace. It was very soon time to go, for Mary always liked to have a rest before making the effort for her father's dinner. When leaving, of course there was much kissing, many parting words and pathetic farewells and earnest injunctions for a speedy return. As Mary leant back in the carriage she felt rather tired, but nevertheless she smiled happily to herself.

How refreshing the young enthusiastic admirat on was to her! It was so honest, so real, so hearty; and honesty and reality and heartiness are precious jewels in this strange world of makebelieve and tinsel.

After dinner that evening Mr. Glyn gave Mary some account of his interview with Carradus.

Mary was intensely interested, and when she learnt that Eleanor Carradus was actually living at Weimar, where she herself had been at school for two years in the bygone days of her youth and strength, a wave of German fever passed over her and certainly influenced the decision she was called upon to make.

"Hilliard, did you say was the name, Father?"

"Yes, he seems to have always been known in Germany as Richard Hilliard. I cannot quite understand what object he had in making the change."

"Now I remember quite distinctly. You know, father, school-girls are always rather silly."

"Are they?"

"Yes, generally, and certainly most of our girls were. Honestly, I was never quite as 'Schwärmerisch' as some of them, but when we went to the concerts we used to 'schwärm' for different musicians. My personal pet was old Herr Meyer the conductor, but lots and lots of the girls went mad over the 'Engländer.' They were perfectly devoted. He was the first violin. Yes, I remember quite well, Herr Hilliard; he always looked so pale and clever. The girls were immensely excited when he played solos, and we used to watch the quiet way in which he stepped about amongst the orchestra giving the pitch. He taught some of our cleverest girls. I believe he died just after I left school."

"I suppose you never knew his wife?"

"Oh yes, she used to play his accompaniments. She played exquisitely. Never solos in public, but her accompaniments were quite perfect. I have never heard any to equal them except those of the inimitable Lassen. They always felt to me like some sympathetic wind chorus, never interfering with, but always supporting the mood of the air."

"Did you ever meet her?" His daughter's information was unexpected and valuable.

"Yes; once I remember she came to the school concert. Herr Hilliard was very good in playing for us on special occasions. I had to 'vorspiel' and was dreadfully nervous; in fact, I meditated hiding myself in an upper chamber for the rest of the evening. Then Frau Hilliard came up to me just at the moment and whispered in English, 'My child, no Englishwoman should be a coward. Let these Germans see courage!' These words pulled me together, and I remember I played quite brilliantly for me. Herr Meyer was charmed and whispered to me, his face beaming with satisfaction, 'Ausgezeichnet!' that from him made up for many tough encounters in the music room."

And Mary's face lighted up, as she recalled those happy girlish days.

"And father, yes, I remember the child too. She was a little girl, a rather petite child of seven or eight. Very fair with large blue eyes, and a mop of light golden hair so different from the turnippy tresses of the German girls. She was constantly at the concerts, and used to sit just in front of us; we called her Der kleine Goldengel."

"Ah then, I suppose she will be fair and small now perhaps, like her mother"—for George Glyn remembered Beatrice Whinery perfectly. He was wondering whether the advent of the Goldengel would be a joy or sorrow.

"She was rather fierce," said Mary. "How amused we were at her one night. She was getting very sleepy during a long overture, and at the final bar her mother lifted her up to take her out. At the moment, her father came forward in preparation for a solo. This was the signal for a prompt resistance, and struggling violently she screamed out, 'Aber Nein! Nein! Will nicht! Mein Vater spielt!' Every one laughed, and Herr Hilliard had to wait a moment. The child, however, got her way and resumed her place by her mother's side, to watch every movement of the bow just above her head. As soon as the solo was finished, and she joined in the tremen-

dous applause, we heard her say softly, "Jetzt will ich, mamma!"

"Well, my dear, I hardly know what to say. This girl would be a companion for you, but then she might be a great charge —a great one. And there might be complications. I really am rather puzzled."

"Yes, I hardly know what I wish myself. Perhaps, father, we ought to go straight on, and not look at results or contingencies. If the Goldengel has been set in our path in this strange manner, perhaps we ought to carry her along with us."

Mr. Glyn believed very strongly in what he termed "Guidance." For years he had practically ceased to consider his own wishes when he thought that the Lord was leading him. His danger lay in allowing coincidental circumstances, which he sometimes took for providences, to influence his sounder judgment, which he forgot was as certainly betowed upon him by his Maker.

After a good deal of backward and forward conversation, Mary suggested that she should think the matter quietly over and give her opinion on the following day.

"Quite right, dear," was her father's response. "I feel that the question affects you far more than any one else, and I would not lay any additional straw's weight on you for the world. I think I should miss our pleasant private companionship also!"

"I wonder what Ryder would think about it?" said Mary meditatively.

"I have wondered that, but there really seems no time to get his opinion."

"No; well of course he may be marrying himself any time, or she might do the same in a very short time."

They did not seem as though they could go any further.

"Well, father, a quiet think when I get to bed will perhaps help matters wonderfully."

Mary always retired early, and did not rise until late in the morning. By this means she reserved her strength for what life brought her in the after part of the day. When she had

wished her father good-night and had been taken to her own boudoir bedroom, the front bell rang, and Dr. Maddison was announced.

His call was a brief one, and he would not even sit down.

"I just stepped round, Glyn, to say that if you have business in hand with Carradus there is no time to be lost. I find he is much weaker to-night. I give him two days at the most; I thought you might like to know."

"I am exceedingly obliged to you, doctor," said Mr. Glyn cordially. "I felt anxious myself, and put the work in hand immediately I returned to the office. I am, in fact, expecting a clerk late this evening with a rough draft."

"Hum, well that is all right. His strong mind keeps him up, but I anticipate that he will sink suddenly at the end."

"A very sad case for the man himself," said Mr. Glyn soberly.

"Oh come, Glyn, I cannot allow you to take the cares of the universe on your shoulders like this. Even you cannot grow every one to your own pattern, much as I admire it!"

"Oh, doctor!" remonstrated the lawyer.

"Well, well, I know I'm an old heathen and quite hopeless; you'll be worrying about me and my soul next!"

"I do already," was the quiet reply. "I often pray for you."

The doctor put out his hand. "Well, well, I do not object to your prayers. Good-night."

"Good-night!" said Mr. Glyn, earnestly; and then he resumed his meditation until the arrival of his clerk.

And so John Carradus's strength failed rapidly, and the lights of the Great House gleamed out across the road all the night, and were only extinguished when the early morning radiance foreran the sun over the brows of the opposite fells. Workmen going early to their daily toil looked up at the windows and wondered dully if the old man were still there. Boys and girls clattered down the road, some hastily finishing a piece of bread, others completing their rough, dingy toilet as the mill

bells rang insistent warnings. From a stifling, unhealthy atmosphere they had for the most part come, and the pure spring morning air struck coldly but refreshingly upon them. The subdued colour of the sky, so tender, so prophetic of the richer tint to follow when the king of all colour rose himself majestic, contrasted strangely with the general effect of unkempt humanity now hurrying forth into the daylight.

The boys and girls noticed nothing; they were too intent on getting to work in time. Certainly Sarah Jameson, a quiet, neatly dressed girl of about eighteen, looked up at the morning's beauty and smiled; but then Sarah had rather odd ways, so the other girls said, and she set up for being a "bit religious."

Beautiful Nell Carradus, too, came running down the road to catch up her mate, Sarah, and she also looked up at the sky, and felt the cool, refreshing breeze, and threw up her arms in all the pure delight of physical enjoyment, and clapping Sarah on the shoulder by the way of greeting, remarked, "Grand mornin', Sally!"

"Grand!" was the reply.

Both looked up at the windows of the Great House as they passed.

"I wonder how t' auld feller is!" said Nell irreverently.

"Oh, Nell! I would not bear any grudge agen him, and him dyin'!"

"I've nowt to thank him for!" she replied, with a touch of scorn in her voice. "And I've nowt to thank naábody for, for the matter o' that!"

And the girls hurried away to the sleepy, dreary, strong-smelling tobacco shop or factory, while the other workers scattered far and wide in pursuit of their daily bread.

Shop-girls and clerks were not yet awake; the more leisured town-dwellers had not even drawn up their blinds; and drunkards were still sleeping off the effects of their last night's debauch; and, as always, mysterious angels of pain and birth and death had been gliding in and out amongst the closed houses all through the night. Even commonplace rugged

Scarthsiders were constantly dignified and forced into acute brotherhood with the rest of the universe by the presence of Death. Their dead and the dead of a king were for one brief space alike. One day a household was insignificant and even contemptible in the eyes of the neighbours—the next supremely important, in its ownership of the dead. And to-day the unseen presence was about them once more.

He had waited apart during the hours of the night, to press forward to claim his own in the day. And his coming was not the less mysterious because he came clothed in the sunlight, cold in the warmth of a spring day, noiseless midst the love songs of the birds, intangible midst the breath of early flowers.

CHAPTER V

ALTHOUGH William Carradus and his wife had kept watch all through the night there had been little change, for the old man had slept peacefully, and woke refreshed and quietened after the nervous excitement which the doctor had noticed on the previous evening. Bell Lancaster did the necessary work, with subdued noise and increased importance, but John Carradus's son William and his wife Janet were supreme in control. She and her husband were sitting together in the pleasant kitchen taking some much-needed refreshment. William wore a grave, earnest look, and sat drinking his tea soberly. His wife glanced at him now and again, and busied herself over the meal. Janet was a kind, practical woman, who respected her husband, and followed him in his intellectual and religious flights as far as in her lay; and for the rest kept the household going and the family contented, had a pleasant gossip for a neighbour, and maintained a kindly, indulgent outlook on those around her, for ever thankful that in her husband she had "getten a good 'un."

There had been a time when William had been far from answering to such a description. He would himself have said

he had been travelling on the high road to hell, and was a brand ready and prepared for the eternal burning.

William had been converted. Really converted, there had been no mistake about it. From a swaggering, gambling, fast-living youth he had turned right round and met the Lord. The power of the Lord came upon him as truly as it did of old to Saul of Tarsus, and he broke resolutely with his old life.

His young wife rejoiced at the change, and from that day forward the steady fear of God changed the man, and all the latent power within him was husbanded, instead of being sacrificed and squandered. In a word, William Carradus began to get on.

Consequently when William took up his parable and preached to his fellows, he put the religion and getting on in the world side by side as inseparably dependent the one on the other. Others might say that religion led to poverty, to abasement, to weakness, but with him experience was all the other way, and he rejoiced in the plenitude of Old Testament promises held out to the ancient Jews of advancement consequent on obedience. "Blessed shalt thou be in thy basket, and blessed shalt thou be in thy store," had a real meaning to him, as had the words of the wise Preacher who preached that in return for honouring the Lord with his substance the barns should be filled with plenty and the presses should burst out with new wine. Certainly William was obliged to use the latter phrase in a parabolical sense, for to him alcohol was the liquification of the Devil himself.

Perhaps William's strongest support in the chances and changes of life was that given him by his own "experience." His experience was precious indeed to him, and as he told it during some white-heated after-meeting, his face glowed with enthusiasm, and he spoke as seeing Him who is invisible.

Probably to a man of his nature a strong, vivid experience of conversion was essential. Certain it was that he possessed it and that it possessed him. Therefore it was that William was truly and anxiously depressed over the state of his father's soul,

"The Devil is gripping me father tight, Janet," he said mournfully.

"Eh! William, don't fret," said his wife soothingly as she handed him a freshly fried egg; "the Lord is merciful and full of compassion."

"But he will not spare the guilty," he responded, "and me father has never repented."

"How dost ta kna'?" asked she. "Happen he tells the Lord more nor he tells thee and me."

"Happen," said he doubtfully. "But it is with the mouth that man confesses unto salvation."

Just then Bella entered the room. "He's exin' for yer, Mr. Carradus."

William rose hurriedly and left his meal.

The old man was lying propped up in bed so that he might get his breath more readily, but even since yesterday there was a noticeable change, and a peculiarly grey look was the most striking impression of his face.

"Thoo'se better this mornin', father?" his son asked anxiously.

"Eh, better and warse. I'se niver see another mornin'—this is t' last. Isn't it, auld dog?" and he patted the head of the faithful Bull who was lying at his side. "Does ta see yon sun, lad? It's eighty year sen I furst sa t' sun, and then I niver kent it!" and he smiled wanly at the thought of himself as a tiny, blinking infant.

"Can I do aught for tha, father?" asked his son.

"Aye, will ta fetch t' lile lad? I'se like to see him yance moor afore I set off. It's a lang road I'se be travellin' noo, Bill!" His voice took a wistful turn, and his son suddenly thought that his long prayed for chance had come.

His father resented so strongly any reference to religious subjects that he had never dared speak to him lately on this, to him, all absorbing subject.

"Eh, father, father, if thoo wad only repent and give thy heart to the Lord! Do, father!" and the son knelt down by the bedside and clasped the white, soft fingers.

But Carradus drew them away. Don't, Bill lad, don't! It's ower laát noo. I'se niver ga sneakin' into glory at t' last. Eh dear, but I'se miss T' Scarth and T' Auld Hoose. I'se capped hoo I'se sattle at a' whar I'se gain' tull. I'd a deal ruther bide whar I is."

"But father!" cried the son, making one last effort, "think of the burning and Hell! Oh father, thoo moant ga to Hell. Thoo moant indeed—I can't bear it!"

"If I mun I mun," was the reply. "Don't thee fash thysel', Bill. I was niver brawt up religious, and I never took tull it at efterwards. Don't worrit thysel', theer's a good lad. Thee and thy Janet hes been good tull me, and I'se tell t' auld woman when I set eyes on her!"

It seemed as though William could not press the point, and he knelt helplessly before the great tragedy of a naked soul about to meet its Maker.

"Fetch t' lile un, William!" said Carradus faintly. Little Jacky was fetched and he was delighted to sit up beside his great-grandfather, and he chattered away happily as he stroked Bull's head with fearless pleasure.

"Would ta like yon beast, Jack lad, when thy gran'father gaas off?"

"Eh, I would so—but whar is ta gain' tull, gran'father?" asked the child wonderingly.

"I'se dyin'! Does ta ken what yon means?"

"Oh, aye! It's when folk gaas off to 'Jesus, Blessed Jesus.' Shall I sing it to tha?"

"If thoo's a mind!"

And the child promptly piped forth in a shrill treble:

"'Sweetest note in seraph song,
Sweetest name on mortal tongue,
Sweetest carol ever sung—
Jesus, Blessed Jesus.'

"That's t' saám Jesus as I talks tull as I gaa to bed. Exe him wedder of nut he minds me when thoo sees him, gran'father!" To the child how real these things were!

to the man who was about to know for himself, how shadowy! "Will ta tek yon with tha, gran'father?" he continued, pointing to the text on the wall. "Thoo could let granny see it!"

Carradus followed the direction of the little finger, and his lips formed the words silently, "The Peace of God!" "There is no peace for the wicked," were the words that passed into his mind from some long-forgotten time.

"Give thy wicked auld grandfather a kiss, and get tha off!" he said quietly.

The child looked at him in surprise.

"Thoo's nut wicked, gran'father! Jesus loves thee and me; we'se both lost sheeps—thoo is a girt un, and I is a lile un, and t' lile uns gets carried, but t' girt uns hes to walk. It's in my picture at yam!"

Carradus smiled at the child. Perhaps he was right—who could say?—but he was very tired and longed for rest, and he did not feel as if he could ever walk again.

Presently the world seemed to reassert itself, and he asked querulously whether Mr. Glyn was coming.

As if in answer to his wish, George Glyn was announced. He began his business without parley, for he saw that his time was short.

He had a few questions to ask, and some points to settle first.

"Who is to have this house?" asked the lawyer.

"Eh! eye, I hed forgetten. It was William. T' hoose and garden, and a couple o' thousand."

He spoke with some difficulty.

"And you still are quite sure, my friend, about the rest—still nothing to Maria?" Mr. Glyn spoke very distinctly and leant a little forward.

"Nowt!" was the steady reply.

"With regard to your granddaughter, Carradus, Miss Mary and I have decided to do as you ask us until she becomes her own mistress."

A look of great satisfaction passed over the man's face, and

he moved his hand feebly. Mr. Glyn saw the movement and took the hand in his.

"Yes, Carradus, by God's help we will do our duty by Eleanor Carradus, or Eleanor Hilliard as she thinks herself." Mr. Glyn left the room for a few minutes and the additional alterations were made, and then he returned to get the signature in the presence of two clerks he had brought with him as witnesses.

It seemed as though with the completion of the business the strength of the dying man gave out.

He lay back panting for breath, and Janet came in to give him what help she could.

"Janet lass!" he gasped—"exe him to bide!"

Janet knew well whom he meant.

"Mr. Glyn, stop a bit, sir, we should take it very kindly," her voice sank to an awestruck whisper. "I doubt he's freetened!"

She was quite right.

A deadly horror of coming death had fastened upon the man, and he cried out hoarsely, "George Glyn, Geordie, Geordie, pray, He'se happen hear tha!"

Mr. Glyn knelt, as he had knelt at many a bedside, and lifted up his voice in prayer to the One in whose presence he so consciously lived.

"Dear Lord, save him! for the sake of Thy death on the Cross; pardon and cleanse him for the sake of the Christ who died for us all."

"The peace of God!" muttered the old man. "There's naá peace for the wicked. I've been bad, but there's been warse nor me!"

Then he broke forth again, stretching out his hand to Mr. Glyn. "Kep hod on it, kep hod on it! Bide wi' me to t' finish. Oh! my God, it's dark—and the sun—I thowght the sun——" he broke off in a fit of coughing.

William and Janet had come into the room, and Jo, little Jacky's father, was standing by the door.

"Jo! It's Jo! He's a fine lad! Jo—no, they called him

Dick! Dick, lad, I meant nowt. I'se aulus loved tha, Dick, I'se asked God many a time to bless tha, Dick—God damn me if I haven't! Come back, Dick, coom! Thy mother is frettin' for tha, lad!"

The watchers looked at each other. "He's lost hissell, Jo," whispered William, "he is thinkin' of thy Uncle Richard."

It was just noon, and the sunlight flooded the room, but there was nothing but increasing greyness on the sick man's face.

He lay gasping in long, deep breaths.

Mr. Glyn leant over him, and said softly and clearly the words, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all!" There was no sign of hearing, and Mr. Glyn's low, even voice continued, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

Still there was no response.

Suddenly he raised himself, as if conscious of some sound.

The door opened quietly, and a woman appeared.

Janet rose hastily.

"Maria, Maria dear," she whispered, "for God's sake don't upset him. Eye, eye, I kna he is dyin'. He can't last long noo, but thoo knaas—oh dear, dear Maria, don't, theer's a good woman!"

But the other pushed past her roughly. She was startled as she saw the form motionless on the bed.

"Father!" she called.

John Carradus opened his eyes on hearing the voice, and looked at her, but there was no sign of recognition in his face.

"Father, father!" she cried again almost petulantly.

Words came thick and low from the heavy lips. "Eye, she went, did Maria, oor awnly lass! Hes ta brawght thy dada his dinner? Theer's a fine lass. Give thy dada a kiss! She's a bonny lass. No! she niver did it. I tell tha thoo's a damned liar. Don't tell t'auld woman! Whar is lile Maria? She was aulus a bonny lass!"

The woman came to the bed and leaned over it. None could stop her even if they had dared.

"Father, father, here I is. Thy lile Maria!"

But there was no response from the fast glazing eyes, and the woman sank down on the floor.

Nothing more was of any avail. The breath now came in unsteady gasps, at longer and longer intervals.

The dog raised himself and crept right up to his master and softly licked one hand, and Mr. Glyn held firm hold of the other.

The room was quite still except for the heaving breath and the low, hysterical sobs of the woman.

Again the door opened, and Dr. Maddison entered. He stood back, realising that his work was over, and that already the unseen visitant was in the room.

There was no further recognition, no further word said, and gradually the labouring breath ceased, and the spirit returned to God who gave it.

William Carradus took his sobbing wife away, but the woman Maria remained kneeling by the bed.

"Come!" said Mr. Glyn quietly. "You must go now—there is nothing more you can do."

"Curse him!" she cried wildly, and then burst into maudlin weeping.

"Oh dear, oh dear—eh, he was hard, hard. I wouldn't have cared if he'd only spoke to ma!" Then a sudden idea seized her.

"Lawyer, hes he left me and mine any brass? I will kna'!" and she stamped furiously.

Dr. Maddison stepped forward.

"My good woman, this is most unseemly. Leave the room this moment. Do you hear?" Dr. Maddison was used to being obeyed.

She rose slowly.

"Out you go," he stormed, in a fierce whisper. "What the devil do you mean by disgracing yourself before the very dead? Go home and take my advice for once—don't touch the bottle until the funeral is over, at any rate. You're reeking of the beastly stuff this very moment."

The woman turned furiously.

"Mother!" said a stern voice behind her. Nell was there, her eyes blazing. "Mother, fer sham'! Can't ta behave thisell? Coom!"

And the woman turned and followed her daughter out of the house without another word.

CHAPTER VI

THE town of Weimar in Saxony lay peaceful and comforted under the deep blue of the spring sky.

Truly at last the winter was over and gone, the flowers began to appear on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds had come.

For months the snow burial had continued. Double windows and well-fed stoves seemed but poor efforts after warmth; chilblains made walking a torment and piano practising a burden; even skating lost its charm, and exercise was benumbed into quietude.

In Weimar the inhabitants take the winter soberly. Skating comes pretty much to an end as soon as the first good ice has been cut up. Tobogganing is not fashionable except as carried on by the indefatigable children who slide down the grassy slopes outside the Old Schloss. Even such effort was considered by the sombre officials as disrespectful to the Gros Hertzog, and was stopped; but happily the great man himself missed the music of the children's laughter, and wondered whither it had vanished, and so the children were recalled, and full merrily they came.

No, the winter joys of Weimar are indoor rather than outdoor. The Weinacht's Fest is celebrated with all the fascinating romance of the Vaterland. The theatres, concert rooms, ball rooms, call the cold-stricken people together, and they come through the old streets and Gassen befurred and beshawled, ready and eager for social enjoyment.

So when the sun resumes his sway and the earth softens at the touch of his warm lips, and all the cherry trees trail in snowy whiteness mile after mile along the wandering high roads; when the mist of emerald lies clingingly on the dull red earth; and the lush hay grass grows strong and high in the low-lying fields where the lazy level streamlets rise 'neath the soft spring rain, and creep higher up the sodden banks; and the silver green of the glistening willows laugh with a quivering laughter to the birds that are making so free with their closely-cropped heads—then it is that the earth's release comes as such a surprise and happiness.

The old Schloss stands as ever, calm and imposing. With the passing of the snow, which had covered every roof and chimney and gable, perhaps some of the fairy-like romance of the place had vanished, but even under the most brilliant summer sky it still retains its old-world charm—its stolid commanding pre-eminence.

In the Schloss Park the evergreens have long since shaken off the snow, and the verdant vanities of spring growth are everywhere apparent.

Two girls wandering along the road which led past the old Garten Haus, where Goethe used to retire for primitive privacy, were making their way across the park towards the wide Chaussé, with its two-mile avenue, called the Belvedere Allée.

They were walking arm in arm in a most leisurely manner, and were evidently in no kind of hurry.

The conversation was being conducted in English, though over and over again German expressions pushed themselves into evidence.

Both girls were fair.

Kätchen von Hervart was tall and rather massively built. She had a flat face, of a dull paleness; hair light and abundant, which was strained tightly back from the face, which, however, looked pleasant and good-natured enough.

The other, Eleanor Hilliard, was very fair also, but the hair was touched with gold, and no human endeavour was able to

smooth or control the aureole which burst out from under the simple round black cap. The face was pale also, but the complexion was clear and white, except where the wild-rose tint had been blushed on to the rounded cheeks by the fresh spring air. Eleanor's eyes were of a deep blue, and she had a straight nose and delicate nostrils, a short upper-lip cleanly cut, and a small, shapely mouth which hid rather than revealed the dainty teeth; while a resolute little chin, with just the hint of an upward turn, gave the final touch of decision of character to the face.

"Aber wie wunderschön!" exclaimed Kätchen, pointing to a golden laburnum which stood out against the deep-blue background.

Eleanor pulled her arm out from under Kätchen's light cloak, and exclaimed petulantly—

"Now, Kätchen, German again! I won't have it. I am here to talk English to you, and you persist in talking German. I shall resign! I shall indeed!"

"Aber liebes Kindchen! I mean dear little child—I cannot always so remember! And 'beautiful,' that word of yours, is not the same as wunderschön!"

"Well—say wondrously beautiful or exquisite, then!"

Kätchen shrugged her shoulders in the true German style.

"Ach, that is not also wunderschön! I want one little word to tell you that the laburnum is a wonder—that each golden blossomchen is a dwelling for a fairy—a little sky fairy, Eleanor dearest!"

The other laughed, and retorted soberly as became a teacher, "Now you are wrong again with your blossomchen. I have told you over and over again that 'little' is the expression we have for your 'chen!"

"I know, I know," returned Kätchen, quite unconvinced; "but that is so round about—as you say, so beschwerlich!"

"Cumbrous," interrupted Eleanor sternly.

"Well, cumbrous then. Now I cannot call you every time my little Eleanor, but Helenchen, that is so simple, so expressive."

"There you are again," said the irate teacher. "I shall tell your Frau Mutter that you are hopeless!"

Kätchen laughed merrily, and pulled her companion along more quickly.

"My little Eleanor, you are tired. Herr Professor, he has been quite too much for you this morning. Come, we will go for one little chocolade and cream and some Schiller Locken at the Conditorei, and that will make this child once again contented!"

Eleanor dearly loved chocolade, as also the creamy pastries termed Schiller Locken, in honour of the curls of the great poet. She had therefore no objection to the proposal, and the girls made their way across the chaussée, through the town into the market-place, where the Conditorei was situated.

"Would you rather have afternoon tea?" asked Kätchen slyly, for she was taking upon herself the *rôle* of hostess.

"No," replied the other, "I may rage at you for the German, but I shall be German myself always! No England and English ways for me, thank you!"

She spoke bitterly, and tossed her golden head contemptuously.

"Ah, I know that you are quite German now, Helenchen, but I know—I know you would fly to your England, if she called you, as to the arms of a——" a mother she was going to say, but just stopped herself in time. "Ach, I talk lauter Unsinn-utter nonsense. Pardon, gnädiges Fräulein!"

Eleanor knew perfectly well why she had stopped, and appreciated the kindly intention.

"My dear child, I feel nothing towards England now but anger. The English they are cold, heartless, stiff. They do not know warmth, or music, or die Bezauberung—or love!"

"There you are, you deutche Engländerin! Well, well, we shall see. I am glad, however, that you like the chocolade better than the afternoon tea!"

Eleanor did not contradict the remark.

With Kätchen certainly the chocolade was preferable; but

to Eleanor the word "afternoon tea" merely recalled sweet pain and a certain primitive little room above the stationer's shop.

How often she had lighted the "spiritus" under the kettle and set the embroidered linen cloth, and put out the real Dresden china teapot, and the cream-jug and the two delicate cups and saucers with the quaint Apostle spoons. A white Semmell or two, butter and a plate of Kuchen. And when the kettle boiled she poured the water on to the tea-leaves, some of which were real Orange Pekoe, and the whole room smelled fragrantly.

One cup for herself, and the other for the mother who sat in the easy chair by the little window which looked down on to the quiet street, and away across through a gap in the houses opposite, to the distant horizon with the undulating country between; just a scrap of the west, from whence the sun smiled his loving good-night; and along the windowsill were ranged in their season, hyacinths, cyclamen, daffodils, primroses, mignonette, monthly roses—all kindly remembrancers of a bygone life.

What pleasant times the golden-haired mother and daughter had together as they gossiped and chattered away like old maids, as the little Eleanor would remark; and how pleasant it was to boil the water and get out the basin and wash the tea-things, and dry them and put them neatly away in the cupboard under the bookcase!

But that was all long ago. Nearly a year, and the little Dresden china teapot and cream-jug and the two little cups are packed safely away now. And Eleanor agrees with Kätchen that she does not care about afternoon tea.

Fräulein Kätchen von Hervart stalked into the shop with great assurance, and was received with politeness by the attendant.

Were not her parents, Herr General von Hervart and his Frau Gemahlin, prime favourites with the Gros Herzog and his Frau Gemahlin? And was there not more Confectionary and Kuchen ordered at the Villa Alma than at any other house in Weimar?

So the girls sat down in a quiet corner, and Kätchen gave the orders.

"Here's to the success of the new position, Fräulein Lehrerin Hilliard!" laughed Kätchen, as she took first plunge into the creamy chocolade.

Eleanor laughed. "Ah, yes, Kätchen, as you know, I do feel tremendously conceited this afternoon. Fancy me—me an Engländerin, assistant music teacher to the great Herr Professor Meyer! It is too unspeakable!"

"Ah, but I have jealousy," said Kätchen. "Oh, I know he adores you—you kleines Engelein! Nothing but lectures and abusings for me; but the Engländerin, ach! she may do anything, anything, and der Herr Professor he——"

"Nonsense," returned Eleanor. "You know I catch it horribly. I nearly gave up music a few weeks ago, I was so awfully sick. If it had not been a case of bread and butter I should have done so. I should indeed!"

"Oh no, you wouldn't, you wouldn't. You couldn't, you know! I remember that Polonaise of Chopin's!"

"So do I!"

"Yes, you would not play it loud enough, you would not excite yourself—you had gar keine Lustigkeit. And the Herr Professor, he becomes more excited, and again more excited, and his face becomes full of storms; and Fräulein Hilliard she sits there so mild, so English, and she plays on and on ganz mechanische, like some muddy stream. Ach, I sit myself alone in the corner full of terror, and the Herr Professor he seizes the Engländerin by the shoulder and flings her from the stool, and she stands—oh so still and calm behind him! And he sits himself down at the Flügel, and he plays—ach wie der Teufel! and the fiercer is the music, the stiffer and the calmer, and the more insulting is das Mädchen, and as he finishes she says quietly 'Ich danke Ihnen Herrn Professor, Guten Morgen!' and she leaves the room. Ach, coward that she is—this Engländerin, to leave den Deutchen Mädchen alone with dem Teufel!"

"Now you know that you were charmed to have him all to yourself!"

"Charmed! I was nearly weeping, and he turned and saw me miserable, and he said ganz ruhig, 'Nun, nun. Now play me a little piece'—just as if there had been no wilde Engländerin in the world."

"But he was sweet afterwards," said Eleanor enthusiastically.

"Ach yes, but Fräulein Engländerin came down from that high horse! To live for three days afterwards in the same house with Helenchen and her Polonaise—Terreeble!"

Eleanor laughed herself at the remembrance.

"And she, the next lesson, so meek, so gentle, and the Herr Professor so quiet! Ach! it was wie Himmel in der Hölle!"

"Yes," interrupted Eleanor, warming with the remembrance, "and he said so politely, in German, 'What do you propose to play me to-day?' and I said, 'A Polonaise von Chopin,' and he said 'Schön schön——'"

"And then he got up and walked about the room, and you sat down without any Noten, and played—ach! as you had never played before" ("or since" put in Eleanor)—"or since, I believe, and you copied the way he had played it himself—Strong, Appassionata, Pianissimo, Staccato, Ruhig, and he was mad, crazy, and he kissed your hand and——"

"Did just what your jolly, warm-hearted German masters do," put in Eleanor. "Well, any way he is an old dear to let me teach under him. Why, Kätchen, I shall be quite rich in time. Your dear kind mother gives me a home, and with my other pupils and this position I shall soon be quite independent. How lovely that will be!"

"I suppose it will," said Kätchen, who had never had a money worry in her life, but had always enjoyed an unlimited allowance for the limited wants she found within herself.

"Oh, you innocent chicken!" remarked the worldly-wise Eleanor; "you don't know what it feels like to have the great busy world rearing itself above you until you feel like a weak boneless worm awaiting the final crush! However, I am nearly through the wood now, and your father and mother

have been angels to me. I shall never, never forget them. Father and mother, to the fatherless and motherless. When I was a stranger they took me in!"

The girl half rose.

"Aber Helenchen, we have always loved you so terribly!"

"Yes, as you say, you have always loved me, but that only makes the debt, the everlasting debt the greater. But there, I think we have been sentimentalising long enough—and just think what we have eaten! Really, I am quite ashamed!"

"I'm not in the least. Just wait a moment, I must have some chocolates as I am here," and Kätchen selected a large package of the best and most delicate the shop afforded.

"I hate common chocolates!" she remarked, half in excuse, as they left the shop.

They made their way through the market-place, past the old Stadt Kirche, along to the West Weimar road until they came to the substantial-looking residence Villa Alma.

From the road entrance the house looked very much like one of the German piles of flats. There was a little scrap of garden in front, and a long verandah well covered with creepers, from which French windows opened into the various sitting-rooms.

The ground on which the house was built formed a kind of ridge, and from the back the garden sloped away downwards towards the pure country fields, beyond which rose the faint outlines of the Thüringer Wald. No expense had been spared in the garden. Smooth lawns, shrubberies, evergreens, herbacious borderings followed each other artistically. Even as the girls entered from a little side path which ran round the house from the front, the gardener and his assistants were busily planting out the beds for an exquisite summer show.

"Ach, Hans," said Kätchen in German, "I am very glad that you are getting forward with the planting. This frontage has looked rather dreary for some time. I want you to show zum Englischen Fräulein that we can have lovely gardens in Germany as also in England, of which she is so proud!"

Hans grunted, "Das Gnädige Fräulein will perhaps see that in Germany we love the flowers, more—far more than in England. The postmaster's son who only the other day returned from the great London, he says that the flower shops even in little Weimar are far more beautiful than any he saw there—and think now in Berlin, ach!" and the old man straightened his back and threw up his hands in admiration of his thought.

Eleanor stooped down and gathered a cluster of violets, and began daintily arranging them against their own broad leaves.

"And this Fräulein, she is no Engländerin," declared the old man—"she is real German!"

"Of course, Hans!" cried Eleanor, "Real German. Germany is the Vaterland to me. I have no other, and as for the Spring time in Germany, it is too enchanting!" and she seized Kätchen by the arm and ran away down the path singing one of Peter Cornelius's entrancing little German songs:

"Scented Spring,
Bear your odours on your wing,
Fragrant violets with you bring.

In your song
To the merry flower throng,
Praise the violets loud and long.

Woodlands green,
Where the loveliest flowers are seen
Let the violets be your Queen!"

"Oh, Kätchen," she cried, after she had flung the last word into the air, "why does the scent of a little flower draw the heart out so?"

"That is a question which even the dear Goethe, Schiller, or Heinrich Heine could never have answered, mein Schatz!"

CHAPTER VII

"KINDER, Kinder!" called a voice from above. "Kinder! Helenchen, Kätchen, the post man!"

The girls turned to see Frau von Hervart standing on the terrace which ran along the back of the house.

"We come, mother dear," called Kätchen, and the girls rose from the little stone seat and came up the garden through an avenue of lilac, hawthorn, and laburnum, out on to the green lawn which stretched between the lower garden and the terrace.

"Always something for you, Kätchen," said Eleanor. "Well, it is a blessing that I am not troubled with endless letters. My correspondence is yet to be!"

"Helenchen, mein Kind, here are two letters for thee!" said Frau von Hervart.

Eleanor's face of wonder was a study as she took the letters, making the slight deferential curtsey as became the younger to the older lady.

"And none for me, mother?" asked Kätchen.

"Nothing for thee; but I hear that thy father returns to-morrow. The manœuvres are over, I am thankful to say."

Eleanor took her letters and examined them mechanically. Letters for her from England!

"What can they be, Kätchen?" she asked. "I know no one in England! I have not had a letter from England in all my life. My mother used to have them sometimes, but——"

"Well, my child, the simplest thing to do will be to open them!" said the lady kindly. "Kätchen, run away, child, and don't trouble her!"

"You speak as though you thought they contained bad news!" said Eleanor, turning her deep-blue eyes anxiously on Frau von Hervart.

"No, no, my dear, but personally I always like to read my letters to myself."

"I will read these with you, if I may?" replied Eleanor, as Kätchen, taking the hint, ran off with an excuse to talk to the gardener.

The first letter she opened was in a plain business envelope addressed in a clerk's hand, with the words "Glyn & Son, Farbiggin" on the flap.

"Glyn & Son! I can't imagine—" began Eleanor again.

"Open it, child!" said her companion again, for she noticed the nervous flush mounting high on the girl's face.

Eleanor broke the letter open. "I shall read it out loud just as it comes, dear Frau von Hervart, if I may?"

Frau von Hervart drew her on to the seat, and heard as follows:—

"HIGH STREET, FARBIGGIN,
"*May* 18, 18—

"Miss Eleanor Hilliard.

"MADAM,—I write to inform you, that owing to the death of your paternal grandfather, I have been left sole trustee and executor of the estate, and guardian of yourself until you attain the age of twenty-one years.

"I understand that the name you are at present known by is not your real name, but is one that was professionally adopted by your parents.

"On reaching your majority you will assume to a large extent the control over your property, which stands at the present value of some £100,000. I am not informed as to whether you are aware of your real name, but it is Carradus—Eleanor Carradus. Your grandfather left directions that you should live with my daughter and myself for the present, and I shall therefore be glad to hear when you can make it convenient to take up your residence in England.

"I have pleasure in enclosing a cheque for £50, for any immediate needs you may have, and though the Will is not yet proved, I shall be glad to forward any reasonable sum you may further require.

"I have asked my daughter to write to you by this mail,

and we can correspond further on plans when I have heard from you.

"I remain, madam, yours faithfully,

"GEORGE GLYN."

"My dear child!" ejaculated Frau von Hervart.

Eleanor turned the letter over quietly and re-read it to herself. When she had finished, she turned her eyes, which were full of strained perplexity, on her companion and said simply—

"Oh, Frau von Hervart, what must I do?"

The lady lifted up the other letter from Eleanor's knee. "Perhaps, child, you will learn more from this second letter if you open it."

The girl opened the thick square envelope and again read aloud.

"THE ABBEY, FARBIGGIN.

"MY DEAR MISS HILLIARD,—You will, I am sure, be greatly surprised to receive a letter from such a complete stranger as I am, but my father's letter will have explained much to you.

"I am Mr. Glyn's invalid daughter and his housekeeper, and I hasten to assure you of the warm welcome you will receive in our house. You must, I am sure, feel very reluctant indeed to leave your German surroundings in order to come amongst so many new faces, but all I can say to this is that we shall do everything in our power to make you feel happy and at home with us.

"I am not quite such a stranger as you will imagine, because I remember, when a girl at the Weimar School, seeing your mother, who was most kind to me. I also remember you yourself as a little girl of about seven years old.

"I shall only further add that the pleasure to me personally of being able to talk over my happy Weimar experiences with one who must know the dear place and the dear language so well, will indeed be very great.

"Believe me, yours most sincerely,

"MARY GLYN."

"A nice, kind, considerate letter!" remarked Frau von Hervart, as Eleanor made no remark.

"Is it?" she replied dully; then she started suddenly to her feet. "Frau von Hervart, I think that you must excuse me—I would like to go away by myself for a little!"

"Do, dear child, and I pray dem lieben Gott to help thee to come to a wise and right decision."

"I do not feel at all wise and right now!" she said, in a suppressed voice. "Please tell Kätchen, Gnädige Frau."

Eleanor went down the road with a firm, brisk step. She knew well where she was going. "If I go to my room," she argued to herself, "I shall cry, cry—I shall rage—I shall 'groll,' but here outside I cannot, stiffe Engländerin as I am. Oh no, the English—they have no Gefühl!"

She hurried on down the road, then along a narrow street, and up a steep bit of road through a little copse wood. She was alone at last, and sitting down on a bank she drew out the letters and re-read them, and then bent her mind to thinking the matter out.

The more, however, she considered the circumstances, the angrier she grew. £100,000 to come to her now—now when she had no use for it! What did she want with £100,000 when all that life held dear was gone? Oh, the long, strained agony of the days just past when money, money, money was her one desire! Even as a little girl she had realised how circumstances were gradually changing, as ill-health laid hands on one parent after the other. How shocked she had been to find her own mother in an agony of tears because she could not give the father all he needed. And then came those later days when the money was still scanty—when she herself had thought that she would sweep the very streets if she could only make a little to add to the comfort of the dying mother. Very, very seldom a letter came from England; how her mother used to watch for the English post that never came! When dying, she had told her daughter that she and her father had been cast off by their English parents for no fault but the Music and the Love, and she had urged upon the child that

henceforward she must be a German girl, and forget that she was ever English, for both her grandparents were dead; and her mother had cried and said that the English were cold and hard, and then she cried that she loved them all—loved them with all her heart, and that she could not help it! Why, the very field in which she was sitting was a favourite resort of her mother, and that was why she had come there. She used to tell the girl that the hay reminded her of her old home in Moorshire, and she would gather armfuls of buttercups, dog daisies, red sorrel and grasses and carry them home to beautify the little room, as tenderly as if she were carrying a piece of her own native land.

"Why is it," argued the girl, "that life is so hard and contradictory? Why should my father and mother have broken their hearts over what it will break my heart to have? Oh, I can't, I can't—I can't leave Germany! Why should I? What has this England done for me? Oh, mother, mother! If you could take the money! If I could give it to you now, now, and make you happy!" And the girl gave a gasping sob, and buried her face in her hands. The whole point of view of her life had changed. Nothing could ever be the same any more. Even her joy in the independence of her post at the Musik Schule had vanished. Certainly for a moment it came to her as a pleasant thought, and the next she realised that the need had all gone, the object for which she had worked was no longer there, was in fact a mere will-o'-the-wisp! Good God! £100,000—why, that was two million marks! and she and her mother had often wanted for a five-mark piece. No, she would not have it. She would write back and say that they could keep it, that she would stay in Germany. Why not? No one cared for her in England so far; why should her life be controlled by a mere lawyer's letter? Glyn? A disagreeable, hard name! A reaction from the first extreme pain to a more simple petulance was setting in.

Eleanor brushed back her hair from her face, and, stamping her foot, remarked out loud, "No, I have quite

decided that I won't go, and no one on this earth shall make me!"

"Aber liebes Fräulein!" She turned round suddenly to find the amazed Herr Professor standing close behind her. He had been out for a little walk, and coming through the wood had heard the English expression and recognised the golden head.

Herr Professor understood English, but he never acknowledged to doing so, and he made a rule never to speak it under any circumstances—speaking English was against his principles.

As he looked at Eleanor he was puzzled. Was she merely angry, or in real trouble? He was a kind-hearted old man and he liked—nay, loved this girl, whom he had known ever since her proud parents had first shown him their golden-haired darling. He felt a true, fatherly interest in her, and had at times considered himself quite justified in exercising something like parental control over this child of sudden impulse. Knowing her, however, as well as he did, he was still puzzled. Was this the usual petulance, or was it something more serious? He knew that there were depths in the girl's nature. He had caught glimpses of such before now. He well remembered only ten months before the slight pale figure in deep mourning on her way from the Friedhof. The expression of miserable, almost reckless woe had haunted him for long. Oh yes, and even in the old music-room he had found out something. In the music she had betrayed herself.

Eleanor looked up, and meeting the puzzled expression on his face, an irrepressible laugh broke from her, even though the blue eyes which looked at him were brimming with unshed tears. The old man felt relieved, and began forthwith to scold, but she cut him short and said in fluent German, "No, no, Herr Professor, I am going to be as angry as ever I like. Oh, I am angry, I am indeed. Some wretched grandfather in England has died and left me £100,000. Oh, it is outrageous!"

"I congratulate you, child. But ach, this is glorious news!"

Eleanor turned on him. "Glorious! Congratulate! Do you think it a cause for congratulation that I have to go away from the dear old Germany to live in England, always in England!"

"But you did not mention that you were to live in England," expostulated the Professor; "you only mentioned about the money!"

"Why, that is the main thing!" she returned tempestuously. "£100,000 to come to me just when my mother is dead—dead of want and anxiety and heart-break! £100,000 to make me independent when my dear kind German friends have done it for me without the aid of any of this miserable English gold!"

"Aber ruhig—ruhig Kind! Let us consider!"

He was rapidly considering a sorrow which was stealing into his own heart, at the thought of the loss of this child companion: for he was a lonely old man, whose fierce temper had alienated him from many.

"I won't be ruhig! I hate your ruhig, ruhig; I will be wild. I suppose I am what they call an heiress now! Du liebe Gott! An heiress with a broken heart!"

Herr Meyer did just wonder whether utterly broken-hearted persons stormed quite so furiously, or, for the matter of that, looked quite so charming when doing it. Still, the passion of the girl was real, even though she was at the moment miscalculating the happiness which youth and wealth bring.

"Nun, nun," said the Professor. "It will become better. You will think it over and will be thankful that you have all these riches!"

"Thankful!" cried the girl, "thankful! There was a time when I would have been thankful—but now! Oh, dear Herr Professor, think now, think of that last concert when I dressed my mother to play, to play for a few miserable marks—marks to pay for the doctor's medicine and the doctor's fees. Ach! I see you remember. How she played that night for the last time in the concert-room, and how the soloist smiled and

bowed, and my mother—— Oh! Herr Meyer, you were kind, kind that night when you helped us home! If even then the postman had come!—but he never came——" And Eleanor began to sob miserably.

Herr Meyer felt called upon to exercise some authority. He drew her hand through his arm. "Come, Kind, you are tired out. Come, we will go home together now. There, there, that is better," as Eleanor tried to look up gratefully. "It is hard for thee, Kindchen, hard, but der liebe Gott He has thee in His charge thou knowest!"

Eleanor did not feel that der liebe Gott was any particular support just then, but the man's warm, solicitous affection soothed and comforted her in spite of herself.

Without waiting further permission, the Professor walked off with his charge and carried on a simple kindly talk till they reached the Villa Alma.

Frau von Hervart was standing in the verandah, and as the two came up she hurried out.

"Ach, Herr Professor, that is kind of you to bring Fräulein Hilliard home!"

"Nun, liebe Frau, I have found a weary child, and I have brought her back for a little rest, and then all will be well!"

Eleanor had recovered herself enough to appreciate the kindly reticence of her companion.

"Oh, Frau von Hervart, I am a stupid, stupid girl! I ought to ask Herr Meyer's pardon, but just now I cannot. It feels to me as if I were not myself, as if I were some other person quite different standing out alone—quite alone in the big world!"

"Well, well, dear child, run away now and get thee ready for Abendbrod. Die Kätchen is already gone."

Eleanor held out her hand to Herr Meyer, who pressed it kindly in his broad palm.

"Come, then, as usual to-morrow, Fräulein Hilliard!"

"Oh yes, just as usual—as if all were the same for a little while longer, please!" and kissing his hand impulsively she left the room.

Herr Meyer stayed for a few minutes, and of course discussed the subject of Eleanor's future with the lady.

As Frau von Hervart remarked, it was a very great change for the girl, and no wonder she was rather upset in her mind; but that, of course, there was no question as to what she must do, for after all she had no real prospects in Germany.

"Ah no!" he responded. "She has talent, great talent, but it is not for a pretty child like Miss Eleanor to hold her own here; if she has good English relations, she is better with them. And this money—this money is not nothing!"

"It seems rather odd that the girl should just have learnt her own name!"

"I know, I know, liebe Frau—I believe, but I am not sure, that the Herr Hilliard was not what these English would call a gentleman. I believe that Frau Hilliard's marriage was a *mésalliance*. I had understood that he was quite of the working classes, but now that this money comes from the father's side, I know not! I could understand if it had been from the mother. Die kleine Frau was a real born lady, that any one could see!"

"Oh yes, quite an aristocrat. I shall be sorry if our Eleanor is to be thrown amongst the bourgeoisie, Herr Professor; she will feel it!"

"But this lawyer you speak of? She is to live with him, and he is not with the relations."

"Yes, that is so. Ach, you think?"

"I think that this lawyer has knowledge of these relations, and he will keep the child to himself and his daughter."

"The daughter wrote a charming letter. I am sure I should like her. She seems to have been at school in Weimar some years ago. Mary Glyn is her name!"

The effect of this last remark on the Professor was electrical.

"Ach, Mary Glyn. Fräulein Mary! Is it possible?"

"Why, Herr Professor?"

"Ach, Frau von Hervart, she was a Schülerin, a dear Schülerin. So true, so real, with a face like a Madonna. She had the true music also when once I had broken her

from her English ways. She was shy at first. Ach, ein liebliches Mädchen!

"She called herself an invalid. I imagined quite an elderly personage."

Herr Meyer made a mental calculation. "Twenty-eight or twenty-nine at the most, I should say! Invalid? Then the Fräulein has had a heart-break. She was no invalid at Weimar! Ach, die Liebe und die Mädchens! Well, well, the world is very small. Adieu, liebe Frau. Send the child to me to-morrow, and I will inspirit her by telling her all about Miss Mary Glyn!" and the kindly old Professor bustled away.

CHAPTER VIII

ELEANOR'S toilet preparations for Abendbrod progressed but slowly. It seemed as though even this large roomy attic, with its gable windows, had changed since the morning.

What a charming room it was. So simple, yet peaceful, and filled with all the worldly possessions of the girl who stood looking at herself with a curiously critical gaze in the large mirror.

The floor was of polished boarding, carpetless except for a couple of small rugs. The usual stove was built into one corner, with coloured glazed tiles.

The bed was of wood, raised high by a mountain of feather quilts, and on the walls numbers of photographs and photo-gravures hung of masterpieces of art, while on the drawers and tables were innumerable photographs of school and other friends. On the dressing-table were two portraits only. One of the mother after whom she was yearning. The other was that of a pale, slender man of about forty. The forehead was broad and deep, the rather long flat cheeks and high cheek-bones showed the North of England type of face, and there was earnest resolution expressed in the mouth and chin. The whole countenance, in fact, gave the impression of firm purpose

and self-restraint, and any hardness was minimised by the kindly light which shone from the deeply set eyes, grey in the reality, but dark in the photograph.

When Richard Carradus had once decided to throw over his old life to seek and find the music his uncultured mind yearned after, he was not one to go back.

Who can say what strange mixture of Celtic, Scandinavian, and Saxon blood was combining to force the young Moorshire life out to find a more congenial, or, rather, a more sympathetic sphere? From the earliest boyhood the music and the song had called him. The mountains, the fells, the streams, the mists, the storms, and the dead whiteness of the snow of his own north country had inspired him with—he knew not what.

Then he accidentally met with a young German who was touring in England.

The young Herr von Stein had lost his way one bright autumn afternoon as he was wandering over one of the highlands of Moorshire. Below him ran a rapid mountain stream, and across the narrow valley lay more fells and high lands in continual fold. He stood wondering as to which mountain path he should pursue in order to pierce the hills upon which the evening sunlight was already settled, and beyond which lay, as he knew, the town of Farbiggin.

The air was still. It was early afternoon, and the only distinguishable sounds were from the gurgling of the stream over the stony bottom far below, and the regular crunch, crunch of the sheep around him. Suddenly the air vibrated with a clear ringing song, which seemed to come from just above him, and which the opposite hills threw back in mournful echo.

Herr von Stein, looking round, saw Richard Carradus, young, stalwart, ruddy.

"Himmel, was für eine Stimme!" (Heavens, what a voice!) he said under his breath. The song was a German air, "Kennst du das Land," but he did not recognise the English words.

His necessity for guidance suggested to him that he should

promptly make friends with the young singer, and before Richard Carradus could realise it, he was pouring forth his musical yearnings to this stranger, who could but half follow what he heard in the rough northern dialect.

He gathered enough, however, to know that here was talent, possibly genius, beating itself helplessly against the prison bars of circumstance; and, being of a romantic nature himself, he suddenly decided to carry this young Englishman back with him to Germany and get him into a position in which the best that was in him might be produced.

Certainly the boy had had little musical encouragement at home, and his sensitive soul had grown nervous, and even apprehensive of his father's continual sneer.

His little sister Maria alone had seemed in part to understand him, and she had loved to go out and listen to the songs he sang to her, out on the wide fells in full view of the distant hills: singer, listener, fells and mountains under one blue and white canopy.

His mother also had been proud of her boy, and would boast to the neighbours of his achievements; but for the rest he was considered "queer," and queerness involved social ostracism on The Scarth.

Then, again, Richard Carradus knew well that he was no gentleman—knew that he could never hope to enter into real close contest with those upper Moorshire sets where some small amount of amateurish music was fashionable. And though there was in some circles the first faint glimmer of real musical enthusiasm he had no desire to become, even if he could, the pet of a snobbish county society, to be smiled at and patronised and admired as an artist, to be ignored on other social occasions.

And so it came to pass that he decided to fly to the land of music, unknown to the unknown, equal to equal, to find his fate.

The subtle connection in feelings between a north country Englishman and a German is unmistakable. The very broadness of the dialect and pronunciation of the vowels gives a

homish feeling to the stranger, and, working-man as he had been in England, Carradus soon found that in new surroundings with a new language, and an artistic atmosphere combined with the genial introduction given him by his young patron, the difference in social position sank, or became less emphasised, and the kindly Germans accepted him as one of themselves, putting down any slight differences to his being a foreigner.

So quickly, indeed, had he raised himself by his natural refinement, quickness of perception, and artistic enthusiasm, that when first he met Beatrice Whinery at the house of a musical friend, the girl was not conscious of any particular social difference between them.

Beatrice Whinery had come to Germany smarting with pain, anger, and mortification, because she had resolutely refused to fall in love at her father's desire and make a match with the great eligible of the county, Sir Matthew Preston.

Sir Matthew was wealthy, handsome, courteous, and solicitous of the hand of the fresh young girl lately returned from school. But Beatrice was full of schoolgirl enthusiasms, and she could not, for some unknown reason, endure the man. He was extremely repugnant to her, though she could not explain why, either to her parents or to herself.

Being of a decided character, after some wavering on account of extreme pressure brought to bear upon her, she refused him utterly, and by doing so, disappointed and angered her parents almost past reconciliation, the more so as her father was under pecuniary obligation to Sir Matthew.

She was sent abroad in disgrace, and the first sight of the gentle, homesick English countenance stirred up all the protective love of Richard Carradus's nature.

He knew well who she was—a daughter of one of the proudest, stiffest, most vulgarly snobbish aristocrats of Moorshire. He told her who he was: the son of a working-man, a Farbiggin Scarthsider, a successful musician.

A struggle betwixt pride and the love of a good man waged in the heart of the girl for a time, then a strongly worded letter

from her father still urging the hateful match, with insolent threatenings, settled the matter; and love, similarity of taste and temperament, together with a sense of bitter wrong, combined to make the girl throw in her lot with the man she loved for better for worse.

And with this decision any final chance of reconciliation between herself and her parents was cast aside for ever, and when she wrote explaining that she was about to marry Mr. Richard Hilliard, second violin at the Berlin Philharmonic Hall, she had passed the Rubicon.

She never really regretted the step, and if at times she was ever conscious of her own superior worldly position she never showed it.

Richard Hilliard, as he wished to be called, treated his wife with all the romantic chivalrous adoration which had at last found a resting-place, and life and love were very sweet during those first joyous days of health and prosperity.

And when the dark days came, and comparative wealth fled at the touch of ill-health, there were times when the strong man bitterly reproached himself for having brought trouble on the one he loved; and then the spirit of the woman overleaped all questionings, and with the wealth of her love she swept away the doubt.

Pride was strong in both husband and wife, and no pleadings, no appeals for help were sent home. They had done no wrong, and they bravely abode by their decision, and gradually intercourse with England ceased.

Had Lady Whinery lived matters might have turned out differently, but she died soon after her daughter's marriage; and Sir Robert Whinery was not the man to change his mind, and he died a ruined man in the same year as his daughter, cursing her for having held back when she might have saved him in days long past.

As to the child Eleanor, who was born soon after Herr Hilliard gained a high position in the Weimar Orchestra, she was the light of their eyes.

She was educated as a German, talking German and English

as the fancy seized her. She had taken herself as she found herself, the delight of her young parents, the plaything of the musical circle in Weimar.

Her quaint sayings, her impertinent retorts, her roguish sallies, her passionate outbreaks, even the very tosses of her golden head were admired and encouraged by the delighted Germans; and when, one by one, her parents were taken from her, there were many friendly hands ready to support the heart-broken girl.

But young as she was, Eleanor yearned after independence, and the bread of charity was bitter to her.

It was Kätchen, her friend at the Musik Schule, who had first suggested to her mother the pleasant arrangement which now existed. In return for a home, Eleanor was to teach Kätchen English, and, in fact, to chatter English to Frau von Hervart and the Herr General himself. And Eleanor accepted the kindly plan with a heart overflowing with gratitude, knowing well the obligation she was under.

And so it came to pass that the spacious attic room in Villa Alma became hers for the time, and all her remaining worldly possessions were brought into it, and it became to her, home.

"Look at yourself, Eleanor!" soliloquised the girl before the mirror. "There you are, Eleanor Hilliard, Eleanor Carradus! English Miss! German Fräulein!—Young still. Beautiful? No, certainly not! Pretty? Yes, for Germany, but probably nothing particular in England! Poor as a church mouse this morning. To-night rich, if only—There! what arrant rubbish I am thinking. I will dress and be sensible."

She went to the wardrobe to select her evening blouse. Being in mourning, she had no choice but white. She glanced at the scanty store. Not the white silk one—that she was keeping nice for the concert next month. The muslin would do for to-night. Her eye caught sight of the cheque for £50 which was lying on the dressing-table. Then she laughed at a sudden thought, and immediately afterwards stamped her

foot at herself for having had the thought. £100,000 in her possession, and yet here she was economising over a silk blouse! Instinctive economy, however, could not be so easily set aside; the future was chimerical still. So she left the silk and donned the muslin and arranged the violets at her throat.

Again she gazed at herself critically.

Pink and white complexion, shapely head with the golden pile at the back, hands not too small, but with long musical fingers, busily fastening an ivory buckle round the trim waist. She glanced at the photograph of her mother. There was the same shapely head and golden hair, but the face was larger, longer, graver. The quaint piquancy of expression was lacking.

"Dear, sweet grave Mütterchen!" ejaculated the girl.

There was a knock at the door, and Eleanor called out the mechanical "Herein."

Kätchen entered, big, comfortable, cheerful. She was dressed in a long black skirt, and crudely coloured checked blouse. The blouse was collarless, and she wore a heavy gold circlet round her neck.

"Oh, Kätchen!" cried Eleanor. "Come and sit down a moment, I want to talk to you!"

Kätchen took the offered seat, but did not commit herself until she had ascertained the mood of her friend.

"Now, Kätchen," began Eleanor irritably, "don't, for goodness sake, sit there looking at me as if I were a creature in a menagerie! I am myself as much as ever."

"So I perceive," was the simple reply.

"I wish you wouldn't make all this fuss!"

Kätchen opened her large, light eyes wider than ever. "Fuss? What am I doing, dear Helenchen?"

"Oh, I know you are not doing anything, but I call it fussing to sit looking at me like that. Talk, can't you?"

"Oh, I can!" said Kätchen slowly. "I can of course say Eleanor, you are now an heiress, you are a very lucky girl. You are going forth on an adventure. You are going out into the weiten Welt to seek your fortune, and perhaps your Prince!

You are weary of dem alten Vaterland! You would weiter —weiter! But think, child. Das Scheiden. Scheiden thut weh!" (Separation means anguish).

Eleanor nearly screamed—"How dare you!"

Kätchen looked up in mild astonishment. "Dare? Oh, you asked me to say something, liebes Kind, and I said the first things that were in my mind. It is the easiest to me to speak just what I am thinking!"

"Then you are thinking entirely wrong! I won't go into the weiter Welt. I have decided. I said I had decided. Why, I told the Herr Professor so. Can't I do as I choose?"

"Perhaps!" was the imperturbable reply. "But I shall say to you what these English schoolgirls are always telling each other. Don't be a 'fool,' child, and don't be a——"

"What?"

"A coward."

"Kätchen!"

"Ah, you may say 'Kätchen,' but I see a little cowardliness if a Mädchen will not take the Schicksal (the fate, I mean) that the der liebe Gott sends to her!"

"If I could stay in Germany!" argued Eleanor.

"Ah, yes, like some Princessin! How this child would hold her head high. How the little Weimar would not be able to contain her and her gold!" Kätchen glanced at the cheque on the table, and arranged a stray curl on the golden head with her soft, plump fingers.

Eleanor could not make up her mind whether to laugh or to be angry, and a decided sound from the vibrating gong below saved her from the difficulty.

CHAPTER IX

AFTER the evening meal, which was on this occasion rather a silent one, Frau von Hervart suggested that they should go into the Musikzimmer and work industriously at some needlework which was urgently wanted for a bazaar.

"And Helenchen can play to us after a while!" she added kindly. "She must get used to her concert playing!"

The girls fetched the three frames, and sat down to the beautiful silk embroidery which is done so exquisitely in Germany.

Such embroidery was real needlework—needle painting in fact, in which there was no approach to the rough outlining and crude "art" colouring which passes for fancy work amongst the large proportion of indolent English girls. On the material stretched tightly over their frames, every thread was considered and accurately placed.

Eleanor worked quickly and, as a rule, eagerly.

To-night she sat quiet and busy; her fingers, one hand above and the other below the frame, passed the quick needle backwards and forwards to each other until the little rosebuds sprang to life up and down the white satin

Eleanor's mind was full of thought too big for speech, and in fact she was too uncertain as to her own wishes to commit herself further, for she was conscious of feeling partly like the heroine of a romance and partly like an ordinary naughty child.

She started when Frau Hervart, looking up to seek for the exact shade of silk she wanted, remarked, "Eleanor, my child, thou knowest I shall always be glad to advise thee at any time."

"You are very kind," was the quick reply. "But I feel wretched to-night, dull, resentful, dogged. Oh, I can't go—I can't!"

"I know, dear child; but thou must see that some would consider thee very fortunate, and such a little thing as a change of residence is unimportant compared with the solid advantage offered!"

"Little! Frau von Hervart, but it is my whole life. Do you not see, liebe Frau, that all my friends are here; and I love the music, and I know that my father ran away from the cold England all for the sake of music!"

"Didst thou never hear thy father's real name before?"

"Yes; my mother told me just before she died. She was afraid of any legal difficulty arising. But I always meant to try to forget it with all my might!"

"And thy mother?"

"Oh, yes, that was Whinery. My mother had, however, no dealings with her family; but you know the history. I told you when she died the reason I would not write for help to England. I forget if I told you that she asked me to send a notice of her death to the local paper, and I did so; but as both her parents are dead, I don't suppose there is any one in Moorshire with the least interest in their granddaughter—or who even knows I exist. Do you not see, dear Frau von Hervart, how horrid it would be to go and live right away amongst complete strangers?"

"Oh yes, child, I see; but there, we will not talk any more about it just now. My husband will be home to-morrow, and he will advise thee. Come, put down the work and play us something."

If Kätchen had made such a suggestion, it is probable that Eleanor would have bounced back into her chair with a "No, indeed!" But a suggestion from Frau von Hervart was a command, and she put aside her work and went across to the grand piano which stood in a distant corner of the room.

"What would you like?" she asked listlessly.

"Anything, dear child. Thou canst give us a little concert."

"Then I will fetch my notes," and she left the room.

"I will light the piano lamps for her," remarked Kätchen. "She is an odd little thing, Mütterchen!"

"Yes, but it will do her good to play to us. I do not think I quite understand her yet. How white she looks this evening! It is strange that so far it has never struck her that she has no permanent home in Germany. She speaks as though her choice lay between a happy life in Germany and misery in England, when, poor little orphan, it was far more likely to be the other way And I cannot imagine how to suggest it to her without appearing to be unkind."

"Thou wilt see, mother, that she will think round to that very soon; and if not, then der Vater, he will put things plainly to her."

Eleanor entered with a large quantity of music under her arm. "You will require much patience!" and she laughed shyly.

After a little preliminary turning over of the music leaves, Eleanor set to work—literally set to work. She played with a light, easy touch, but there was plenty of reserve force and resourceful power when needed. Sometimes with notes, oftener without them, she played piece after piece.

The listeners made no remarks, but remained apparently absorbed in their work, though Frau von Hervart now and then caught herself watching intently the earnest, serious face so clear in the lampshine.

Every changeful mood appeared in her choice. A melodious Schubert, a complicated Schumannish struggle; a bit of clear, satisfactory, wholesome Bach. Then a plunge into Chopin to keep her fingers and her delicate musical sense well occupied. Beethoven? yes, and a sonata dashed forward, and then a weird scrap of Wagner; now a tender Schubert impromptu, like a sudden calm after a tempest, with the heavy ground-swell surging up now and again.

As the last soft notes crept forth, Eleanor wheeled round on the stool.

"Would you mind if I played my Concert Stück which I have learned for the concert? I want to be sure of it. I know it is stupid without the orchestra."

"Oh, certainly; I am sure we shall like it, though I have forgotten what it is."

"Liszt's arrangement of the Todtentanz" (Death Dance).

She found the notes, and laying them down at her side, began.

Before she had played many notes of the weird strain the listeners looked at each other, and the room seemed filled quite full with an overpowering spirit of the music.

On, on she played, as if she were heart and soul mingling

with the very dance itself. She gave her hearers no respite. Not a touch, not a suggestion was spared them.

Eleanor had never played quite like that before. Her face flushed at last, and two red spots burned on her cheeks.

She did not even hear the door open, nor see the start which Frau von Hervart gave as her husband entered the room. She motioned him to silence, and he stood leaning against the door, tall, stately, unbending, with a half-smile on his lips as he listened.

"Bravo, bravo, kleine Tänserin!" he said in his deep, even voice as the music ceased.

Eleanor started violently.

"Why, Rupert! and how did you arrive so soon?" cried his wife; and Kätchen rushed forward.

"Ah, it was unexpected luck. I found I could get away, and it is probable that the magic of the music carried me along also!" He laughed, and held out his hand cordially to Eleanor.

"Die Kleine looks tired this evening. I think that das Todtentanzen is not good for such fairy fingers!"

"I am not tired, Herr General," said Eleanor, bringing herself back sharply to the present. "I have only been practising, and dear Frau von Hervart and Kätchen have been most patient!"

But the flush still burned steadily, and in a few minutes Frau von Hervart ordered the two girls away to bed, with strict injunctions not to talk any more but to go each to her own room.

On the following day Eleanor held two conversations which caused her to come to a decision with regard to her future plans.

The first was with Herr Professor Meyer.

She went to the Music Schule in rather a subdued if not shy frame of mind, and gave several lessons to young students, who remarked to each other afterwards that Fräulein Hilliard was very unreasonable and dull this morning.

During the last hour of the morning she had arranged to

go through some concert music with Herr Professor Meyer. At the appointed time she entered his private room, made her accustomed Schülerin curtsey, and greeted him with a pleasant "Guten Morgen," hoping earnestly that no reference would be made by him to anything that had happened the day before.

She played simple unconsciousness so well, that for a moment the Herr Professor, with yesterday fresh in his mind, was a little nonplussed.

He let her, however, play off a show piece on Schubert's Forelle, and stopped her several times abruptly with instructive remarks; and the more blissfully unconscious Eleanor appeared, and the more cheerfully she followed out his directions, the harder and more particular he grew.

In an ordinary way he would have been quite satisfied, for she was playing extremely well, but this morning he was hypercritical, and Eleanor's face grew worried with the continuous interruption for such slight reasons. At last, after a second repetition of a certain passage which still did not please him, he asked for the "Noten," for Eleanor was playing, as she usually did, by heart.

"I am sorry, Herr Professor, but I have forgotten to bring them."

"But you know I always expect you to bring the noten."

"Oh yes, I know; and, as I say, I am sorry!"

She looked up at him quietly, as if she dared him to continue the subject. But by doing so she lost her primary desire.

He rose impatiently and paced the room.

"Ah, well, Fräulein, then we will have no more music for the present; you will tell me instead when you propose to leave us?"

Eleanor's face crimsoned.

"Shall we not go through the Concert Stück? I played it last night quite abominably. I have the notes!"

"Afterwards we have the time; but tell me—you go to England when?"

"I don't know! I don't even care!"

"Aber Fräulein!"

"Oh, do let us go on with the music!" she urged desperately.

Herr Meyer looked at her calmly; he was determined to say his say, and her present mood was one he thoroughly understood and rather enjoyed.

"Yes, after one little word from the old man! See you now, you are a young girl out alone in Germany—yes child, alone, for I wonder if you understand that the kind friends you are now with could not perhaps—I mean you have no claim, and——"

The flush left the rounded cheeks, suddenly.

"Go on, Herr Professor—please go on, do not stop!"

"Ach, child, you have spirit, you understand, I am sure you——"

"Oh yes! I understand quite well. You would tell me what I have been thinking—thinking all the night, and every bit of this morning. Of course I have no claim. No claim on any one in the wide world! It is nice of you to explain it all so beautifully to me!"

There was an ominous trembling about the little mouth, and she took up some music and began to play.

But the Professor laid his hand on her arm.

"No, Fräulein, we will finish! You are angry—oh yes you are, you need not shake your head; but liebes Kind, it is better that thou shouldest take what der liebe Gott sends, even though there is pain. Ach, Kind, thou canst not know that the pain is not to thee alone in this thing——"

Eleanor looked up at a certain uncertainty in the last words. Nothing strung her up so quickly as the sight of pain in another. The Professor's evident weakness brought forward her woman's strength in a moment.

It was her turn to lay her hand on his arm.

"Dear Herr Professor, das Leben is full of pain. Let us not speak of it longer. This child will do right if you give her time! Now let us play, shall we?"

"Play then!" he agreed, and she played until the end of the hour.

As she was leaving, he told her of Mary Glyn, endeavouring to inspirit her into contentedness; but here Eleanor grew perverse again.

"I cannot imagine that an invalid Englishwoman will be particularly inspiring!" she argued.

"Still, das Fräulein is also an Englishwoman!" suggested the Professor, with a half smile.

Eleanor made him a sweeping German curtsey and withdrew, leaving him murmuring to himself, "Aber was für ein Mädchen."

The other conversation was with Herr von Hervart.

Eleanor held the General in awe, and when he intimated that he would like a few words with her, she felt that there was nothing for it but to have them.

Herr von Hervart was extremely kind-hearted, and had received the girl into his household with real pleasure, treating her with an almost petting familiarity; and the many conversations in English with his girl teacher had often resolved themselves into regular sparring matches which Frau von Hervart and Kätchen enjoyed with keen amusement.

Still, he was used to being obeyed by his men, his wife, and his daughter, and Eleanor also was conscious of the intangible power.

"So, child, then you have had letters from England—important letters?"

"Yes, Herr General."

"May I see them?"

Eleanor passed them to him silently, and watched his face as he read them.

"I see. Of course there is no question as to your action."

Eleanor made no remark.

"I mean"—looking through the lawyer's letters again—"the money is left to you—that is settled. Your guardian is appointed. That also is settled. Your guardian directs you to

come to England. There is nothing for you to decide but the date!"

Eleanor moved restlessly in her seat. Why could she not push off this fate that was enveloping her?

"Now, child," he continued calmly, "my wife has told me that you have been a little 'aufgeregt,' excited you would say, and there has been some mutiny in your heart. But this is all nonsense: you and Frau von Hervart can arrange the dates—that is comparatively unimportant, but it remains for you to write a nice letter to the lawyer, which you will show to me, so that I consider whether it is all in order."

"Oh, of course if Frau von Hervart would rather I left here, it is quite right!" began Eleanor very quickly, fearing that she might be stopped.

She was stopped, for the General came up and looked down at her sharply.

"Nonsense, more nonsense!—as if any one wished to get rid of you. But this matter is irrevocable. It is fixed. Now not another word! Why, little one," he said kindly, as he saw the serious expression, "thou art quite a rich woman now. Who knows what the future has in store for thee! Come, be cheerful! thou knowest well how welcome thou wilt always be—why, die Kätchen could never bear to be parted from thee for long. Here, take the letters, child, and answer them quickly: we must make thee into a business woman now!"

Eleanor rose.

"Ah yes, child, and where is that cheque? Ach, thou dost not know thyself yet. Bring it to me and thou shalt have thy thousand marks to play with. A thousand marks will stop thy dreaming!"

Eleanor could not help laughing.

"Oh, Herr General, don't!"

"Oh yes, Fräulein Hilliard, I will. Now do as thou art told, and all will be well!"

CHAPTER X

THE new Town Hall bells of Farbiggin were clanging out the tune of "Oh dear, what can the matter be!" with a harsh, penetrating sound, which stopped for the moment the business in the shops near at hand, and made new-comers in the streets wonder what strange monsters had been turned loose upon this harmless little town.

Clang, clang discordantly, tunelessly, rang the bells. As the tune stopped the stranger rejoiced, but the inhabitant knew well that the pause was but a momentary respite from the torture. Yet again the notes rang forth, once again the pause, and then a third time—and at last peace for three hours.

But the bells had been a gift, and though day after day they drowned the musical chimes of the old parish church, and eighteen times in one day played the same tune, in their unique jerkiness, fifty-two times in the year, the inhabitants were first pleased, then put up with the nuisance stolidly and grumbled.

Only on festivals, when her Gracious Majesty, or his Royal Highness, or his Worship the Mayor required special honour, outward dissatisfaction again became acute, for then the clanging went on for a full hour three times in the day. The effect on the brains of the hearers was, as Rob would say irritably, "Like baby playing the piano with one finger, or like the piano tuner at the schoolroom piano."

To the young people in the tobacco factory, the bells brought nothing but cheer. To them they sounded the release—release from the strong smell of tobacco and snuff, to the light and fun of the town outside. At the first sound, the streets were crowded with boys and girls hurrying along homeward. Many of the faces looked worn and prematurely old, but they showed no lack of eager interest in life.

Pay was low in the tobacco shop, and the work was in some branches distasteful, so the better class of workers generally

made for the other factories, and so it came to pass that the 'bacca lads and lasses were looked down upon by the others —for there are unfathomable grades in social position even amongst factory hands.

Amongst the first to rush out were some eager-faced lads.

"Coom on, you lads! Let's off. I'se in a girt hurry; my mother hes tatie pie to-day," cried a slender, pinched-looking lad of some twelve years, who's real name was Dicky Dixon, but whose "byname" by which he was usually called was "Rat."

"Ger out, then, to thy tatie pie, Rat," retorted a tall, sallow youth named Ben Sinkinson. He spoke bitterly, for he recognised that weak tea, and bread and butter was the most he could expect.

"Ger out of t' roád, lads!" called a strong, cheerful voice. "What! Farbiggin streets wasn't med joost for you lot to tramp in!"

"A' reet! 'Bacca Queen!" retorted Dicky, "Lads, lads, room, room for her Majesty! God save the Queen!"

Nell Carradus laughed. "Eh, Dick lad, hurry off, thy pie is coolin'. Hark, them auld tin trays is stopped, and it's time!"

The bells were a particular torment to Nell. The discordant irregularity of the tunes got on her nerves.

"Ay, Nell, we ken as thoo 's turbel keen on them bells!" remarked Ben.

"What does thoo kna' aboot what I'se keen on, Ben Sinkinson!" was the instant reply.

"Noo, Nell lass, I ken what thoo likes," and Ben went up closer to the girl. "Will ta coom to-neet?" he said, in a low voice.

"No, I waint!" she replied scornfully; "off with tha and pick thisell oot another lass!"

There was a burst of merriment at Ben's discomfiture. Nell had had "lads" to choose from almost ever since she could speak, and the ambition of many a factory hand was to get a chance with the 'Bacca Queen.

Sometimes she would, and sometimes she wouldn't. They

never could tell, and there was always, therefore, a delightful risk in the venture.

"Wha will ta hev, Nell darlin'?" said Dick cheekily. "Coom wi' me!"

The thin, delicate-looking boy stared roguishly up into Nell's face.

She looked almost compassionately down at the boy, as a great mastiff might look at a tender puppy.

"A 'reet, Dicky; I'se hev thee to-neet!" she said unexpectedly. Then she gave a glance at the group round her, "These girt uns may suit thersells wi' t' other lasses!"

The boy looked up into Nell's proud, handsome face eagerly.

"Eh, Nell, does ta mean it? Eh, but thoo is bonny!" he added almost involuntarily.

"Ger oot!" she laughed and pushed past him, and walked off up the street followed by several others.

"When do they bury thy grandfather, Nell?" asked a heavy-faced girl named Jane Ann Martin.

"Setterda' efternoon. What for?"

"Oh, I nobbut just wanted to kna'!"

"Aye, thoo's aulus intull ivery thing! Happen there is summut else I could tell tha?"

"Well," began the questioner doubtfully, for she was not quite sure regarding the last remark, "theer's a deal as wants to kna' whether any fortune is coming to tha!" Then as she saw Nell's face darkening, she added hastily, "Theer's bets on it, thoo knas, Nell!" The boys behind heard the question and pressed forward anxiously.

Nell turned in fierce displeasure. "Jane Ann Martin, tak' thy enquiries somewhere else, thoo pryin' beggar. Thoo'll coom tull a bad end wi' all thy enquiries!"

"Ah, thank tha; then he hesn't left tha anythin'!" said the girl rudely. "Eh, lads, Nell Carradus, or whativer she calls hersell, ull be a beggar lass till t' finish!"

Nell's face flamed at the insinuation regarding her birth, and the boys all laughed. They liked to see Nell flare up; it was rare sport.

Ben muttered under his breath, "Eye, she's nobbut a mongrel efter a', isn't Nell!"

But Nell saw the eager looks, and understood their anxiety for a scene.

"What are you a' lookin' at?" she asked calmly, and she turned round and stared at first one and then another of the group. "Was it ME you a' wanted to see?"

She knew her power, and even in the old working dress, the tall, handsome dark-eyed girl, with the regular features, and the masses of soft brown hair coiled round and round the shapely head, bowed the group before her strong beauty.

Young Arthur Calthwaite, J.P., riding his thoroughbred with a careless, easy seat, passed the group and noticed the girl. He turned on his saddle and looked back at her, and as he rode forward he swore to himself that he would look her up some time or other.

At the moment he was rather busy with Lady Margaret Temple. This girl would keep.

And John Fleming, young assistant florist, passed about the same time and looked at the girl, who honoured him with an offhand nod as she was turning up a narrow dirty yard with houses on each side, which led from the main street up into The Scarth.

In a few minutes she turned in at a narrow entry, and opened a door on the left hand. Through this door was Nell's home.

Maria Carradus had already set out the meal. On a not too clean cloth were a few plates and cups and saucers, a loaf of bread, a pound of butter to cut at, a dish of potatoes, a half-empty pot of jam, and of course tea.

The fire was bright and the grate well polished, and the room had a comfortable air of cleanliness, which was due rather to Nell's energies at night than to any efforts of her indolent mother.

To-day Maria was full of talk respecting the coming funeral. She was a weak, frivolous-minded woman. Foolish enough—yet this same foolishness was of that quick, calculating kind

which kept her continuously on the look out for idle, easy-going means of benefiting herself.

Maria could never take trouble over anything but scheming and gossiping. Her house was of ill-repute even for The Scarth, and the "goings on" there were matters of common gossip.

What attraction there was in this weak, idle, slovenly woman it would be hard to determine, but she managed somehow to hold her court like any professional beauty, and she counted her triumphs with pitiful pride.

Years ago a chance for life happiness was written large on the bright, hearty face, but the woman had fallen, fallen, and year by year the marks of vice burnt their strange unmistakable brands on her countenance, and the drink was rapidly completing the wreck.

Nell had often and often considered the question of leaving home, but without any definite results. Perhaps if the truth were known, certain small results of her mother's sins in the shape of the three younger children of the household had had some influence on her decision.

Though herself reckless, high-spirited, and troublesome, she had scornfully refused to be any party to her mother's misdeeds.

Well known as Maria Carradus was, and large as was Nell's own following of love-lorn lads, the honour of the 'Bacca Queen was in the main unchallenged; in fact some of the lower spirits were greatly annoyed that such a girl with such a mother should dare to "keep hersell oop."

But though Nell had romped and quarrelled and laughed with nearly every lad in the district, and had staked her reputation for repartee against every wit, man, woman and child, on The Scarth, she still remained unique and unconquerable.

And though there were certain spiteful souls, mostly women, who would suggest that Nell Carradus was no better than she should be, others as steadily refuted the insinuations, and some into whose houses Nell had gone in times of sickness

as a veritable angel of comfort were the most eager in her defence.

Weakness and sickness rode victorious over Nell's heart; she seemed as though she were powerless under their influence, and at their approach away went the rough dare-devil spirit, and a tenderness and reposeful gentleness took its place. When wanted she came, and when not wanted she stayed away, treating those whom she had been all in all to for the moment, with careless indifference when no longer wanted. When the need returned she was ready, and many a night's rest was lost by Nell as she took the place of some worn-out mother or worried daughter.

Even when quite a child she had been welcomed as a sick nurse, and Dr. Maddison well remembered the first time he came across her. He was visiting a child patient whom he expected to find full of excited irritation, and was greatly surprised to find peace reigning and a rough little girl seated at the bedside bathing the fever-heated forehead with regular, delicate touch. "I'se gitten Nell!" said the child faintly, as if that explained all. Often after that the doctor came across "Nell's work," and lately when sorely perplexed he had himself urged on patients to seek her aid.

It was no use his asking her himself, for she would never have stirred for him.

"Eh, doctor, yon Carradus lass is a caution," said old Betsy Hutton, to whom he made some suggestion as to getting Nell for the night. "I'se best send our lile un to exe her, for she waint coom for brass."

No, Nell never took pay, for that would have quite spoiled the delight.

So there were many grateful hearts who refused to listen to tales of Nell.

"Eh, Nell, I is bothered whar to git t' mournin'!" said her mother as she poured out the tea.

"Mournin', mother? What, thoo'll niver bother aboot mourni ı' fer him as is nowt tull tha!"

"He was my father!"

"Eye, thy father, as died without a word for tha."

"Eye, but what would t' neighbours think!"

"Let them think. They are aulus thinkin'; they've nowt else to do seemin'ly!"

"Now Nell," expostulated the woman weakly, "surely I may ger a bit of black for my awn father? Besides, happen he's left us summut. Auld Geordie Glyn was theer joost afore he died!"

"Rubbish, mother!" retorted Nell. "He was done wi' tha long enough sen. Thoo'll hev to tek' thy bed, as thoo'se med it! That's in t' Bible, I believe!" and the girl laughed hardly.

"Well, I'se sure I've aulus tried to do well by tha, Nell!" Nell glanced at her frock, her heavy clogs, her own get-up, and that of the three children who were squabbling on the floor over some bread and treacle.

"Hes ta, mother? Then thy well isn't mitch!" and again the hard laugh rang out through the room.

"Thoo's handsome anyway, Nell! Handsome like thy——"

"Damn!" interrupted the girl suddenly, and the children looked up, and little Bobby whispered promptly to his sisters, "Nell said a bad word, and I shall and a'!"

"Well, thoo is, Nell, and we are poor enough, God knas. Anyway, I don't know whar to look for a bite and sup for you a'! I do my best, and if thoo wod nobbut help a bit!" and the woman looked admiringly at her daughter with the eye of a connoiseur. "Why, Nell, thoo could get anythin' thoo wanted, anythin'! I was niver as handsome as thee, niver, and yet when Sir Matthew——"

The girl rose.

"Mother, I tell tha I waint hev it. If thoo dare to say yon devil's name again, I'll—Good God, what waint I do!"

The woman stopped half frightened, and said conciliatingly, "A' reet, lass, niver heed. Here, hev another cup o' tea. I was careful to mek it fresh as thoo likes it!"

There was a quiet knock at the door, and one of the children called out carelessly "Coom in!"

John Fleming half entered the room.

"Hullo!" said Nell shortly, and she went out into the little passage and closed the door. "Well, what does ta want, my lad!"

"I called to ask you if you would come for a turn to-night, Nell?" he answered, and there was a shade of anxiety on his face.

"Naa, I waint! I'se promised another lad."

"Oh, Nell, not——"

"Niver heed wha it is. He's a nice decent feller, and he treats ma respectful!" and Nell laughed charmingly up into the young man's disappointed face.

"All right," said he calmly; "then good-day, Nell—here's a beauty I've brought you."

Nell took the exquisite Marshal Neil rose from his hand, and smelled its fragrance with a delight she could not disguise. Then she put it against her dingy frock and laughed at the contrast.

"Look, Jack! A grand ornament for a 'Bacca lass!"

"Queen," he corrected.

"Well, Queen then, if thoo's a mind!"

"Then you'll come to-night?"

"Naa, I waint, so thoo knas. I'se promised, and I wadn't disappoint t' lad I'se promised for a' t' warld, Jack Fleming!"

He turned away with an upward nod of his head as he again said, "All right then!"

"If thoo wants thy rose back, thoo can hev it!" said Nell grudgingly, for she felt it hardly honourable to take the flower if she refused the favour.

"No, keep it if it's any good to you, Nell. I don't want it!"

"Thoo's a good lad, John Fleming," she said relentingly. "I'se hev it for a keepsake, look!" and she stuck it into her dull green dress. "Now be off!"

And the young man withdrew obediently, and walked quickly away down the narrow yard.

CHAPTER XI

On returning to work that afternoon, Dicky was consumed with pride and self-importance.

"What's oop, Rat?" asked a small companion, who with Dickie was seated under a high table, picking up scraps from the workers above.

"Mind thy awn business!" was the retort; then suddenly considering that he was in need of help he added more politely, "I say, Tom, thoo couldn't lend me 2d. could ta? I'se pay tha back o' Setterda'!"

Tom looked doubtful. "I hev it, Rat lad, but I was wantin' half on it mysell to-neet. What does ta want it for?"

"Why thoo sees I'd like to tek her a flower!"

"Wha?"

"Why," whispered the boy, "T' Bacca Queen thoo knas, she's promised me to-neet!"

"Niver!"

Tom looked out from under where they were squatting and could just see Nell, who was busily "pointing" or arranging the tobacco leaves in regular order for a man who was turning them into twist. She was laughing and talking as usual, and in her part of the room, at any rate, life was not dull. Then he looked at his companion respectfully—

"Well, thoo can hev it!" he said, bringing out a penny and two halfpennies and laying them in Dicky's outstretched hand.

Dicky beamed. Here indeed was luck! and he could hardly get through the afternoon, so eager was he to rush out to the flower-shop.

When at last the release sounded he darted away, not, however, without a knowing nudge at Nell's elbow as he pushed through the crowd.

"Reet, Dicky!" she whispered, as she took Sarah Jameson's arm and walked off.

John Fleming was in the shop as the boy entered.

"A twopenny flower for a lady!" said the boy.

"Oh," said John—"a grown-up lady? What kind would she like?"

"A rose ull be t' best!" said Dicky, holding out the coppers and pointing to a Marshal Neil rose, a companion flower to the one Nell had already received that day.

"Those roses are 3d. each!"

"Oh," ejaculated the disappointed boy. "I wonder if I could get another penny. I kna she likes yon, she hed yan in her breast this efternoon, but flowers soon gets dished in t' 'Bacca shop!"

"Well you must make up your mind, so be quick!"

"You couldn't let ma hev it for twopence? I'd bring t'other penny o' Setterda', or I could go some errands for yer to-morra neet," he said wistfully—then he added proudly, "I'se engaged to-neet!"

The shopman hesitated. "Them's joost soort Nell likes!" persisted the boy.

"Nell?"

"Aye, it's Nell Carradus as is the lady!" and the boy held up his head and his bright eyes gleamed in severe contrast with the pale, emaciated cheeks. "It's her as hes promised ma for to-neet!"

A look of mingled relief and amusement crossed John Fleming's face as he looked at the child.

"All right, lad, you can have it for nothing, and I'll pay this time," and he put his hand into his pocket and put threepence into the shop till.

Dicky stared as he took the rose into his grimy hand.

"I must spend this twopence!" he protested. "Here, give me some o' them lilies o' t' valley!"

John Fleming took back the rose, and added a spray or two of lily of the valley, together with some maidenhair fern, tied the stems altogether, and covered them with silver paper. Then he went across to a corner where some unsaleable flowers were lying, and picking through them came back with a buttonhole.

"Here, lad, there's one for you to wear. It won't do for you to go courting without a flower yourself!"

Dicky's pride was now quite complete.

He had never had such a bouquet in his life before, and away he sped up a short cut he knew of, back home to tea.

"I waint let my mother see this lot!" he thought to himself, so he concealed them as well as he could under his scanty jacket, and crossing the kitchen, he made for the narrow staircase which led to the bedroom.

But his mother was too sharp for him.

"What hes ta gitten?" and she pulled him back by the collar.

"Will ta shut up!" cried the boy.

"Tek' that for thy impidence!" and he received a resounding box over the ear.

Dicky was quite used to such treatment, and a few blows more or less were a mere detail to him. So he wriggled himself out of her grasp, but finding that the game was up as far as concealment was concerned he held up the flowers tauntingly.

"Looks ta, mother! I'se off coortin'!"

The woman laughed a rude, harsh laugh.

"And whar hes ta gitten t' brass to buy yon wi'?"

"Never heed, mother. Thoo can smell 'em if thoo'se a mind, and if thoo'll gie me my tea sharp!"

The sweet scent refreshed the woman, and she laid the flowers gently down on the chest of drawers which served as a dresser.

While tea was preparing, Dicky was very busy in the back kitchen. He emerged looking sleek and shining, his rough hair had been smoothed down with quantities of water and parted in the centre, and a neatly arranged curl on each side of the parting was plastered down on to his forehead. His boots were well blacked, his hands were as clean as he could make them, and he wore a red neckerchief in place of tie and collar at his throat.

He delayed adding the finishing touch of his Sunday coat until he had had his tea.

Mrs. Dixon laughed good-naturedly at the apparition, but Dicky was not in the least put out. He calmly ate his tea, put on his coat, arranged his own flowers in his buttonhole, and took up the dainty bouquet, and after a cheeky nod and wink to his mother, he slammed the cottage door and ran off to his lady-love.

Half an hour afterwards Nell and Dicky were far removed from the sights and sounds of The Scarth, out and away wandering over the close sheep-nibbled turf of the High Fells, breathing the pure evening air which the south wind was blowing up from the distant sea.

Higher and higher they went, and Nell forgot her eighteen years, and climbed and ran races with her boy companion, and laughed mockingly when she beat him.

Dicky's unusual appearance tickled her extremely. She could not get over it at all.

"Eh, Dicky, but thoo is a masher!" she said, as they sat down to rest under a bit of broken wall to eat some toffee which she produced in honour of the occasion.

Dicky smiled complaisantly at himself, and rearranged his buttonhole.

"Now, Dick, let on whar thoo got t' flowers fra?"

But Dick was not going to give himself away. He was a gentleman taking a lady out. It was not for the lady to ask rude questions.

So he jumped up suddenly to gather a couple of orchises which were growing a few yards away.

He brought them back, and reseated himself.

"What do t' girt lads say to tha, Nell, when they gaa off with tha?" he asked curiously.

"Maistly nowt!" she replied, taking the orchises and examining their delicate beauty in detail.

"Lads is maistly fules! Anyway t' lads as I kna is! They can just mannish to say 'Coom on, Nell!' and then they're done. I'se fair sick on 'em!"

This remark caused Dicky to feel very superior. He had already told Nell a lot of things; all about his last fight with Tom, and how he was trying for an attendance prize at Sunday school, and how hard he was practising for the Whitsuntide races.

"Shall I show tha, Nell, how fast I can run?"

"Aye, if thoo's a mind!" she said cheerfully.

Dicky flung off his coat, and ran some fifty yards or so, and then returned.

"That was grand!" he panted. "I can beat Tom easy now, and he's t' best at oor school!"

"Good gracious, Dicky, how white thoo is! Thou moant run like yon!"

"Oh, I'se a' reet, leastways—" and he sat down hastily.

The sunset glow was spreading all over the sky now lighting up the northern and eastern fells gloriously, and throwing the dark mountains which bounded the western horizon into dark yet penetrative shadow.

This High Fell was like a wide platform erected by Nature, from which her children might behold her wonders and acknowledge their own insignificance.

The day was fast closing in, and the level rays of the sun just sinking behind the Moss Scar burnt fiery red between the branches of a group of Scotch firs on to the faces of the boy and the girl sitting on the broken wall.

But no glow reddened the face of the boy.

"Dicky, promise ma thoo'll niver run like yon again! Theer's summit wrang wi' tha!"

Dicky laughed cheerfully. "Why aye! I kna that weel enough. They thowght I was asleep at t' horspital, but I wasn't and I heard t' doctor tell t' nurse as I was through for once, but that if t' pain started again I'd be done in fower moonth!"

"And hes it started?" Nell shook Dicky by the arm.

"Oh eye! It's coomed! But niver heed. What's the odds!"

Just then a young rabbit peeped out from under the black trunk of one of the Scotch firs.

Instinctively Dicky leaped to his feet. "Eh Nell, if we'd only a tarrier! Happen I'se hit it wi' a staan!" but the rabbit was too quick for him and disappeared into his hole.

Dicky laughed. "Eh, did ta see how he winked at ma and cocked his lile tail? I wonder if his mother clouts him when he gaas yam?"

"Thine does!"

"Why eye, va near aulus! But what's the odds?"

Dicky was fond of asking this unanswerable question. It served him as a support for his plucky young soul on many an awkward occasion.

Just then they heard voices, eager, chattering voices, and over the hill top came a group of golfers.

"T' vicar and his wife and two o' their lasses!" remarked Nell. The two watched the strokes and listened to the laughter, as they passed to the putting green below.

Catherine nodded at Nell, and said a pleasant good-evening, for she was in her Sunday-school class, and Nell nodded back in an offhand manner without rising.

"It looks nice—golfin'!" said Nell, "I could do it!"

"Of course if thoo was a lady!"

"But I am a woman!" and Nell rose up to her full height. "I'm strong, I'm young. Why should I bide in the 'Bacca Shop all day while such as them enjoys thersells? I'se as good as they is!"

Such an idea had never occurred to Dicky, who had always taken his social position as in the natural order of things, and had established the policy of getting as much fun and as little punishment out of life as possible. He looked at the speaker critically.

"Eye, if thoo was dressed up, Nell, thoo might be a lady. Eh, I'd like to see tha a lady. Thoo'd beat em a'!"

Nell laughed. Dicky was hitting upon an idea which had been worrying round in her mind for some time past, though she would never have acknowledged it even to her mother.

She had been wondering vaguely if some change might come to her through her grandfather's death. What if there were some money for her? What if the time was coming when she might become a real lady! What would it feel like?

Nell knew that she was a beauty. She had been told it often enough by her admirers; and when she looked at her face in the glass she knew that they were right. But when she looked at herself as a whole in the shop windows going down the street, she saw only the rough factory girl, and the sight was gradually becoming unbearable to her.

Ambition was laying hold of Nell, and not recognising the feeling, she felt unaccountable irritation in herself and with her surroundings.

A short time since she had readily enjoyed things which now she hated, and circumstances worried her now, which previously she had never even noticed.

It had been whispered in the 'Bacca Shop that "Nell Carradus was gerrin' prood," a scornful epithet which was always thrown at any who desired to better themselves.

Nell had even struck for higher wages and had got them. She had dared the manager, and made him acknowledge that when she was pointing for any man who twisted, he could make twice as much wage as if he had any other girl, and she had stolidly argued that she was worthy of a rise.

Envy had seized on many other girls, and amongst them especially Jane Ann Martin, but the men looked on Nell with growing respect.

But a strong desire was seizing upon Nell to leave it all. What if she could get some money and go away and educate herself! The idea was intoxicating.

And then Nell knew the history of her own birth, and when Sir Matthew and Lady Preston drove through Farbiggin with their daintily dressed children, Nell would stand looking darkly at them.

She never would utter a word aloud, but when a child she had often gone away by herself and cursed the whole party. But now she seemed to have passed beyond the desire to

merely curse Sir Matthew. It was herself, her mother, God, and the world in general she was beginning to blame.

After these fits of despondency, the old hearty Nell would return for a time, and she would recklessly dash into her knock-about life with renewed energy.

"I tried to be a lady once!" mocked Nell to Dicky. "I walked reet oop t' High Street efter Lady Margaret Temple. She's tall like me, and she walks beautiful. But I couldn't walk like her. I tried, but it was naá use. Happen it was my clogs!"

Nell turned suddenly and waltzed by herself on the turf.

"Nell!" said Dicky, in a loud whisper, pointing to two figures standing together against the sky.

"Jane Ann and Ben, by gum!" said Dicky.

Nell sat down promptly. "They'll mek a good match. Look, he's tryin' to git a kiss off her!"

She rose again as suddenly as she had seated herself.

"Coom on, Dicky, we'se off. T' air isn't healthy when sic folk is aboot!"

Dicky got up. "Nell, will ta gaa wi' ma just once or twice up and down t' street! I'd like to show t' others as I'se gitten tha!"

Nell acquiesced joyously. She foresaw some paying off of old scores.

"Eye, Dicky, coom along. We'se gaa up and down t' High Street until they've a' seen us, and then we'se gaa into t' Green Dragon for supper!"

This was indeed grand, and Dicky squired his lady down the fell and over the loose stones and away down through The Scarth to the great Farbiggin promenade, where all the boys and girls paraded with unabated energy night after night.

Groups of girls, four or five in a row, all leaning towards the others gossiping—lads in little detached crowds smoking cigarettes, and passing what they considered witty comments on the girls who eyed them with deeply dissimulated indifference. Every night was the same. Always the boys and girls, always the dressing up, the wit, the giggling, the rough-

ness and the flaring gas-light, and always amidst a large amount of harmless fun, the great tragedy of life laying hold on one and another.

Dicky was in no way disappointed at the sensation he created amongst his own mates.

The tall girl sauntered up the street, talking eagerly to her young companion, only giving the most careless of nods to her many acquaintances.

The great youths nudged each other and mocked when she had passed, but they had too great an eye to the main chance to openly scoff Nell for her evening's choice.

Sallies were levied at the beaming Dicky, but he was quite impervious, and was carefully saving up for a few good rounds with his fists later.

"Gitten thy mammy out wi' tha to-neet, Dicky!" called jealous little Katie Benson, who had considered Dick as her speciality.

"Not that I care!" she called after him. "Prood folk is sure to fall!"

"She's mad!" said Dicky joyously to his companion. It was glorious to be making the girls mad.

"Whar hes ta gitten thy toppin fra?" inquired several.

"It's my curls they mean!" he remarked, putting his hand as carefully over his forehead, to see that all was in place, as any highborn lady. They passed Tom, but he was in the secret, so he had no insult ready. He merely looked at the flowers, and slowly closed one eye and opened it again.

But when John Fleming passed, not sauntering but walking briskly as on business, Dicky could not help calling out, "Here, Mister, don't they look grand!"

He stopped short.

"Good evening, Nell."

"Hullo, Jack!"

"You do look nice," he said, looking admiringly at Dicky.

"Don't I, and doesn't she?"

"Shut up!" said Nell. "Coom along, Dicky! I've promised

him supper to-night at the Green Dragon," she explained unwillingly to John.

"May I come?"

"I suppose it's a free country!"

So the three turned back, and walked away in the direction of the Green Dragon, about which so much was being said in the town.

CHAPTER XII

THE Green Dragon was one of Ryder Glyn's experiments. When the men at the Club chaffed him mercilessly, and tenderly inquired after his "Pub," he joined in the joke. He talked of the affair as a commercial speculation, from which he intended some time or other to get a handsome dividend.

He told his friends that as a dear old aunt of his had just left him a decent sum of ready money, he was perfectly justified in investing it exactly as he chose. They were at liberty to take Brewery shares if they liked to do so; he preferred to run his own concern.

So the optimists considered that at last the problem had been solved; but the pessimists sighed and hoped for the best, with the clearest anticipation of the worst.

Those who preached the popular doctrine of leaving things alone and letting sleeping dogs lie, smiled indulgently, but carefully weighted the balance against the Green Dragon.

However, down the capital had gone, generously and judiciously. Ryder Glyn's idea was, that not expecting a fortune for himself but merely a suitable interest, he might afford to spend what a Brewery Company could afford in preliminary expenses, especially as he was unweighted with the huge expense of licensed premises.

If he could not make his dividend he was prepared to drop it, but meanwhile he resolutely discarded all voluntary effort; every one must be paid and the people must pay. "We are sick of charity in Farbiggin," said Ryder to Mary, as they sat over the fire, when the preliminary plot was hatching.

When Ryder came down from Cambridge with his degree, he was filled with a desire to carry out the enthusiastic ideas of some of the most earnest-minded sets at the University. It was a great change to settle down in this quiet backwater of a country town, and he would pour out his soul night after night to Mary, who listened with eager interest, vaguely surprised to find this young brother going far beyond the glimmerings of dissatisfaction with things in general which had been troubling her own mind, and speaking out opinions which she had been secretly blaming herself for holding.

Often Ryder Glyn was perfectly right, but sometimes he was wrong, for, as Mary would tell him, he jumped to conclusions with quite alarming leaps, and had a whole assay of generalisation ready merely on the slight foundation of some practical incident Mary had told him the day before.

The Green Dragon was situated towards the centre of the High Street, where the road was the widest and the sauntering crowd was the densest. The front was brilliantly illuminated with electric light, and a large sign painted with realistic splendour in green and gold showed forth the awful monster from which the establishment took its name.

When Nell, John Fleming, and Dicky pushed through the great swing doors, they found themselves in a wide light passage, with other swinging doors to the right and left. They entered to the right, on which was painted "Supper Room." The room was very large and lofty, and beautifully decorated. Even though fairly crowded, there was a spacious comfort about the place which was instinctively felt.

From the simple oaken wainscoting dado to the delicate wall tint and elaborate frieze, all showed style and taste. Across the entire end of the room were drawn, in golden lettering, the words,

"The Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth,"

whilst across the lower end were the simple words—

"We ought not to do as we like, but like to do as we ought."

This room was also brilliantly lighted, and, Spring night as it was, a modest fire was brightening one side of the room. The flooring was of parquetry, and small solid-looking square tables were placed up and down the room, whilst at one end was the buffet. As they joined this crowd of boys and girls, men and women, Dicky had another opportunity of displaying himself.

"Of course I do the paying!" said John, taking them up to the buffet.

"What would you like Nell, and you too, Dicky?"

There was ample choice—hot tea, coffee, cocoa, milk, soup, aerated waters, of all kinds; hot fried potatoes, sausages, roast potatoes, bread and butter, cakes, etc. There was plenty of attendance and trade seemed good, but the customers fetched and carried their own to the different tables. The charges were very moderate, and John was in no way ruined by what he had to pay.

It was a pleasant sight to see this huge supper-room, and even the noise, of which there was plenty, produced a homish sociable feeling.

After the meal, which was one long absorbing delight to Dicky, they rose to go into the other room. Their supper cheques passed them through the opposite door, otherwise they would have had to pay a copper each; even as it was the doorkeeper looked askance at Dicky. But he pulled himself as big as he could, and John Fleming good-naturedly guaranteed his behaviour.

This room was quite as large as the other, but instead of the buffet there was a platform and a piano, and at the small tables different games were in progress.

The place seemed quite full of chattering, laughter, music, and smoke all mixed indiscriminately together. It seemed as though something were about to begin, for a bell rang at the upper end from the platform. A few bars of music, and then an untutored voice sang out, in a deep bass, "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep,' which was received with great applause.

"Let's have another, auld chap," called a voice from one of the draught tables. "Gaa on, lad, now thoo's cleared thy whistle!"

So the "Village Blacksmith" sounded forth, sung with immense energy, while some joined in at certain familiar bars. As the accompanist looked down the hall, she noticed Nell standing by the door watching the scene. She was a bright, energetic little personage—a music teacher who had been engaged for attendance every night, and right well she fulfilled her rather difficult task. And it was no light one to keep every one happy from seven to eleven o'clock. She was getting to be an expert at picking out entertainers, so she hurried down the room to Nell, and asked her to give them a song.

Nell turned quite red and said shortly, "No, I'll nut!"

But Miss Emily, as she was popularly called, was not so to be put off; she was the recognised entertainment committee all in one, and she knew Nell could sing and she was determined that she should do it.

"Have you had supper?" she asked.

"Eye."

"Oh that's all right, then of course you will oblige us. We all have to be sociable and do our bit here. Come, I have any amount of music up there. Do you know 'Kathleen Mavourneen'?"

"Well, yes," said Nell reluctantly. It was a song she was particularly fond of, and she wondered how Miss Emily knew it; but Miss Emily knew a good deal more than she appeared to know.

"Naá, but I want to be going now!"

"Oh nonsense, you are not shy!" said Miss Emily scornfully.

So every one thought, but Nell knew differently.

However, Miss Emily was quite determined, and Dicky, squeezing against her, said eagerly, "Eh do, Nell darlin', for my sake!" and he gave her one of his irresistible winks.

John refrained from making any remark, as he was afraid of

doing more harm than good, but his silence nettled her, so she marched up the room, with a "Coom on!" to Dicky, and sang her song.

Nell could sing, there was no doubt about that, and the noisy room honoured her by relapsing into silence.

Clearly and resonantly the words dropped from her lips, and as she noted the stillness, she thought what fun it would be to try to make them cry.

So she threw herself dramatically into the pathos of the piece, and was well rewarded by hearing quite a number of sniffs up and down the room, only the worst of it was that at the end she discovered a great tear-drop trickling down her own cheek, and though it tickled dreadfully she dare not brush it away, in case any one should see.

There was a burst of hearty applause, and loud demands for an encore, but Nell moved off without a bow or a "thank you" to her audience, and hurrying off the platform, she signed to Dicky that she was off.

It was only nine o'clock, and the dread "Oh dear, what can the matter be" was clang, clanging out for the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth times that day.

Poor John Fleming did not get much attention, for the "Good-neet, I'se gaain' wi' Dicky," was said with such an air of finality, that he could but stand aside and let her pass.

So the oddly assorted couple went out into the street again and away up on to The Scarth. On their way they passed the Great House. Nell looked up at the windows.

"He'll be lyin' in theer!" she remarked.

"Could us gaa in and see him?"

Dicky knew that every day crowds of persons had been in to see the dead, and here was a chance of getting in himself if only Nell would.

The girl hesitated. She had intended to take but little notice of the death of her grandfather, under the dim impression that people might think if she went near, that she was making up to him to see what she could get. But after all, when she considered it, he really was dead now, and there

could be no harm. She would certainly like to see him ; she had seen so many of those still, resting figures.

"My mother said this dinner-time as he was a grand corpse, and as the flowers was lovely. She thowght as William Carradus must be expectin' summut to get sa many flowers. They might let me in too, if I gaa wi' one o' t' family!" urged Dicky.

Still Nell hesitated. "If I do gaa in," she meditated, "I'se niver let on to my mother!"

As she still stood undecided, the door opened to the knock of an errand boy, and Janet Carradus, after taking in the parcel, looked up and saw Nell.

"Why Nell," she called, "how is ta? Is ta comin' in?"

"Naá, I don't kna!" said Nell dubiously.

"Thoo might as weel. Why, wha's yon?"

"Oh nobbut Dicky Dixon, he's turbel set on seein' him."

"Well, come along in the two of you!" she returned good-naturedly. "You'd both like to see him. There's a deal been to-day and yesterday. We'll have to nail him down to-morrow." So they followed her into the room.

All was quiet and peaceful, and the large clean room looked somehow larger and cleaner than ever, and only That lying on the bed in the narrow wooden case, banished any idea of emptiness.

Bull was still keeping watch, curled up in a chair by the bedside, and he gave a low growl when the visitors entered, but he stopped when he saw Dicky, who seemed to know him, for he stroked his head fearlessly.

Certainly the flowers were beautiful, and in their fresh, pure beauty they contrasted strangely with the thin white face with the sunken cheeks and scanty hair, which looked so solemn and awed. So very, very quiet.

Mrs. Carradus came up to the bedside, and Nell and Dicky stood silent. "This then was the man," thought the girl, "who has cast us off, and who scowled at me whenever I met him. My grandfather!"

"He meks a beautiful corpse, doesn't he?" whispered Mrs. Carradus, very low, as if the dead could hear.

"I don't kna!" the girl replied. It was odd, but she suddenly felt a horrible mad inclination to strike that solemn face, and she had resolutely to hold back the curses.

"Eh, I wonder how he's likin' it?" whispered Dicky. "I wish he would speak and tell us."

"I don't!" said Nell. "Coom Dicky, let us awa'. Thank tha, Aunt Janet. I'se sorry, but I don't like 'em. I'se niver gaa to see another!"

"Eh, Nell," said Dicky, as they escaped into the free air again, "I'se glad he's dead!"

"What for?" She could not imagine why Dicky should care either way.

"Nobbut I shall hev a bit o' company when I gaa, and shan't feel sa lonesome. I'se exe him to show ma round. He was a friend of mine! I've takken yon Bull out many a time exercisin', and fetched his supper beer and a'!"

"Then you'd no need!" cried Nell angrily. She was vexed that the boy should have been on friendly terms with the dead, and worried that he should go on so calmly about his own decease.

"Besides, Dicky, it's nonsense thee talkin' as if thoo was dyin'!"

"But I is!" returned he, in a matter of fact voice. "I knaa as I is, weel enough. Thoo isn't religious, is ta, Nell?" he asked abruptly.

"No, I niver was; I'se niver seen t' mak as suits ma yet!"

"My mother isn't neither, nor I isn't. Oh no, I ken as I isn't, nobbut I wish thoo was, Nell—when a lad kens as he's dyin' it meks a difference."

Nell stumped along doggedly. What was this thing which people called death. What? nonsensical, naughty, cheeky Dick dying? The idea was absurd, she wouldn't admit it, she would not have it.

"I'll tell tha summut, Nell," confided the boy. "Nobbut I can last while efter Whissuntid and get me prize and gaa yance

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mair to Ottarthwaite, I won't care! Eh, Nell, but it was a grand supper to-neet. Yon John Fleming he's a good sort. It was partly him as geve me them flowers! Theer, I'se telt tha!"

Nell pulled up sharply and put her hand up to her flowers.

"Dicky!" and she pushed him off.

"Why, what's t' row? He's a good un, Nell. Thee hev him—he's a deal better nor any o' t' others!—Aye, I'd hev him, Nell—as thoo can't hev me!"

Nell burst out laughing at the solicitous tone of his voice.

"Why, Dicky, thoo shouldn't cooart for other folk. Thoo should do it for thisell!"

"I'd like, but I'se niver wed tha; I'll niver last while I'se auld enough. But I'll tell tha what, I'se hev tha for a nurse! I'se die better and more comfortable like!"

"Good gracious, Dicky!" cried the girl furiously. "I won't hev tha talkin' rubbish like yon. Get along home to thy bed, and think on, as if thoo wants a decent supper any time tho'se nobbut to say. Now be off, and good neet!"

Dicky laughed. "Good neet, then. Eh, it hes been grand!"

"Grand!" she acquiesced.

"T' Fell, and then t' street, and then t' supper, and a corpse to finish wi!" said the boy cheerfully, as he departed.

CHAPTER XIII

A FUNERAL on The Scarth is always a matter of serious moment, and when such a well-known personage as John Carradus was to be laid in the grave, it was only to be expected that large numbers should assemble together to see the start, and follow right on to the cemetery on the other side of the town.

Nell still kept to her determination not to buy black for her grandfather, and this of course meant that she could not go to the funeral; so she contented herself with watching out of the little window, as the coffin was borne down the narrow lane to

the street where the hearse and the mourning coaches were waiting.

Mr. Glyn had had some conversation with William Carradus, and had explained to him roughly the terms of the will, and given over into his hands the funeral arrangements.

Here was a grand opportunity for Janet, and she undertook with the greatest satisfaction her share of the work. She was a hospitable soul, and enjoyed acting hostess, and liked to feel that things were done right and properly.

Janet knew well the etiquette of The Scarth funerals, but she was determined that this one should outdo all others, and should in fact be in a style befitting the obsequies of the master of the "Great House."

William had tried to hinder some of her more ambitious plans with the mournful remark that Lazarus, who had no funeral to speak of, was a great deal better off than the Rich Man who had a burying.

But Janet felt the clutch of this world and its fashions upon her, and so she replied quaintly—

"Eh, William—happen thoo's reet, but it waint do no harm to bury t' poor feller decent. I'd like to think as thy mother 'll ken as we hev behaved well tull him—and there's always t' neighbours to consider!"

So she had her way, and refused anything less than the new hearse which had lately come from Manchester to the order of the Nag's Head proprietor, which had real plate-glass sides; and she went herself to the hotel to ensure the eight mourning coaches coming in style, with drivers dressed properly.

"Don't you let them men come any how because its The Scarth," she said to the proprietor. "If you don't tell 'em particular, they'll come with their boots not blacked and nobody knows what sort of trousers. Think on as there's brass to pay, but we'll have no first class paying for a second class job!"

And the proprietor smiled politely, and undertook that all should be in first class order, for he knew something as to John Carradus, and was aware that there was a purse behind.

Now Janet had been particularly anxious to make a good show with the coaches. She knew that, generally, six persons sat on each other's knees in one chariot, but she was determined this time to make the people stretch to the coaches, rather than the coaches stretch to the people.

"We'se only hev three in each coach," she told William, "and I'se hev one by itsell, without any one in at all. The gentry often hes carriages at funerals without any folk inside 'em. It's a bit of a waste, but it's t' fashion. There'll be all our own folk, and t' Rope spinners' wives—and Mr. Glyn and t' doctor by theirsells, and if we have eight carriages that leaves one with naábody in!"

So by this means she won the distinction of which she boasted for years afterwards, of engineering the largest funeral that had ever been known on The Scarth.

She arranged for the usual coffee, ham sandwiches and "funeral buns," which latter in Farbiggin consisted of large circular sponge-cakes, which were supposed to have a special faculty for comforting woe.

She fitted up Bell Lancaster with new mourning for the occasion, so that she might hand round in proper style; and having made her hospitable arrangements, she freely invited her relations and friends to come in before the start, telling them that they were kindly welcome.

She further purchased for herself the most sumptuous mourning, and forced William, much against his will, to buy the second Sunday coat he had had since his conversion. She struggled hard after a silk hat, but here William was obdurate, and she was obliged to content herself with a round one with the broadest black band it would carry.

And Maria Carradus also managed, by dint of the credit system and other means which she had at her disposal, to rig herself and her three younger children out in appropriate style; and many a neighbour came in to see the girls' frocks and Bobby's suit and Maria's gown, mantle, and bonnet.

For Maria had been down to the Free Library to see the

fashions, and she had seated herself at the ladies' table and got everything properly into her mind before visiting her dressmaker, who afterwards confided to a friend that she had never before had such a faddy customer.

Nell looked at the women who crowded into the small kitchen with ill-concealed scorn. She knew well enough that those who were flattering to-day, because they were not quite sure how things would now be with Maria, would be the first to mock and backbite to-morrow. Nell had not lived on The Scarth for eighteen years without knowing that.

"Thoo might give a look, Nell, and tell me if this bonnet suits," said the mother querulously, as she stood up to the little glass smirking at herself.

"It's grand, mother! Thoo looks like a real lady!"

"Do I?" said the delighted woman. "Well, Nell, I think as really I isn't sa bad lookin' even at my time o' life."

"Why naá, mother. I say thoo looks real grand. Folk 'ull tak tha for one o't gentry at t' funeral, thee don't fret thisell!"

Nell was busy at the moment scrubbing the hearthstone, and she scrubbed all the harder for a moment or two.

So when the afternoon arrived, Nell stood by the little window and looked out.

First came the coffin, borne by the six men employés at the Rope works, who had all been furnished with gloves, hat bands, and ties. On the oaken top were several wreaths, and a huge cross the gift of the spinners.

Then came William, looking extremely solemn, with Janet, who wore rather an anxious expression, as if she were thinking of something that some one had forgotten; then Joe and his wife and Jacky, leading the reluctant Bull. Then another son, Reuben, and his young wife Susan, and lastly Maria and her three children, each holding a black-edged handkerchief up to their mouths.

Maria was walking with eyes cast down, but was most careful to keep her long black skirt and deep crape out of the mud; but the children, whilst retaining the hand-

kerchiefs in the correct positions, were excitedly glancing round to see which of their mates were present to behold their glory.

They looked up eagerly as they passed their own cottage to see Nell at the window, but she hastily stepped aside and refused the answering nod.

"Yon's Geordie Glyn," said a rough-looking plasterer who was standing in his doorway smoking. "I'se heard as he hes a deal to do wi' Jacky' brass, but naábody kens aught fer sure. William Carradus, he's a close 'un. He tak's efter his auld father."

"Looks ta!" said a woman who was standing on a neighbouring doorstep with her hands carefully tucked away under her apron. "Theer's t' doctor. He's doin' t' last job fer his brass. He'll be off efter this to write oot t' bill; he could va' near kep a wife on it. Bell Lancaster, she says he coomed ivery day for months!"

"Well, it's a good job as he hed t' brass to pay wi'," said a feeble-looking creature with a baby in her arms, which she was shaking every third moment to quieten its nerves. "Some on us—why, we hev a job to get t' dispensary brass, let alone t' other!"

And now a miscellaneous crowd surged forward, quite filling up the narrow lane, and the procession disappeared round the corner and under the blue sky which peeped down with a clear smile between the house rows, and thus John Carradus left The Scarth for ever. And Janet made the sensation she desired, for as the hearse and the mourning coaches stood in the street waiting for the bearers with the coffin, the Saturday holiday-makers in the town were asked by many a country farmer, "Wha was deád this time?" and their surprise was great when they learnt that it was a Scarthsider who was being thus honoured.

But Mr. Glyn knew very well that the tug-of-war would come, not at the funeral, but at the reading of the Will; and he was determined to get it over as soon as possible.

"I have told William Carradus," he began to Dr. Maddison

as they were slowly driving through the streets in the carriage provided by Janet, "that I had better read the Will aloud to them all at once and explain how matters stand. It is better to stop any sort of misunderstanding."

"You'll have to expect a little taste of real Scarthsiding," said the doctor, his keen eyes twinkling.

"Yes, I'm afraid that woman Maria Carradus will be extremely disappointed."

"Disappointed, my dear sir!—that is no word to express what her state of mind will be. She will ramp and rage and swear and call down the very Devil upon you and the whole family. Oh, I know the woman!"

Mr. Glyn looked solemnly out of the window. "I hope not, I am sure. I hope she will have some control over herself; but I confess it seems a little hard from her point of view."

The doctor laughed. "Hard? Well, in a kind of way I suppose it is, with such a pot of money as there is, by all accounts; but I can't pity that woman. I can't. She's a fool."

Dr. Maddison had a great contempt for a fool. Genuine badness he condoned, but he had no pity for any one whom he could describe as a fool.

"I suppose she is, poor woman!"

"Look here, Glyn," said the doctor good-naturedly, "shall I come and protect you, as Ryder is away? I should have liked to see that boy at this job. He would have enjoyed it, and you don't. If you'll excuse my saying it, that is where you make a mistake sometimes in your dealings with these people. I assure you, you don't enjoy them sufficiently. You will have a rough time of it, and Maria is not one to mince matters, but it will be as good as a play, for all that."

Mr. Glyn smiled gravely. "I am sure I am much obliged to you, but I would really rather see the thing through myself. It is, after all, business, you know. I shall cut the interview short, if possible."

"I tell you what," said Dr. Maddison. "Mind you get that

girl Nell Carradus to appear on the auspicious occasion. She is the only one who has the least chance of holding her mother in. I don't see her here, by the bye. That's rather odd, as she generally has a passion for funerals. They appeal to her in some way."

"Perhaps she will be very disappointed herself. I have seen Nell Carradus disappointed before now, and the sight is not pleasant."

"Oh, of course, I agree. You may be landed with two furies at once, but I think I would risk it. Do you know I have a growing respect for that girl. She is really a fine character at the bottom, and, by Jove, she is handsome! Why, I have sometimes thought of getting her out of that hole, and having her trained as a nurse or something decent."

Dr. Maddison continually thought of doing things, only these said things so often had the knack of not coming off. Probably that was the reason why he had never married. His life was just a shade pointless.

So, late in the afternoon, Mr. Glyn sat in the front room of the Great House, where the remains of the refreshments were still vexing Janet's orderly soul. She did think they might have waited until she and Bella had had time to side up. However, when Mr. Glyn said in that quiet manner of his that he was coming, there was nothing else for it but to let him come, and she could not have expected Bella to miss the funeral, with new mourning and all.

There were present besides Mr. Glyn, William and his wife, Jo and Martha his wife, Reuben and his newly married wife Susan, Maria and Nell.

Nell sat conspicuously amongst the black-clothed group in her bright Saturday-afternoon frock. She had come partly at her mother's earnest entreaty, and partly because of a certain wildly suppressed excitement of which she was vaguely conscious, and which had been making her very restless all the afternoon.

Supposing! Ah, that was it! Supposing——

Nell gasped all alone by herself in the little kitchen at home.

And now, seated in that front room of the Great House, her heart thumped violently as the lawyer began to read the preliminary part of the document.

She was determined, if she could, to understand in spite of the legal phraseology. But she was soon baffled. There seemed to be the names of her uncles and her cousins, but she did not hear that of her mother, and certainly not her own. But the quiet voice read on and on—there was time yet. Nell looked out of the window, and mechanically she watched a train slowly puffing up the valley away upon the opposite hillside. Nell had often watched the trains before. Sometimes she had felt as though they linked the little town with all the rest of the world. North and south they went, day after day so regularly, so certainly. This one was going north—on onward, under the Red Fell; it would round the corner directly, round the corner and disappear up the valley away into another great world which Nell had never seen.

"And the residue of my property I leave to George Glyn, solicitor, in trust for my granddaughter, Eleanor Carradus."

Nell started: the train was nearly round the corner.

". . . daughter of my late son, Richard Carradus, of Weimar, Germany."

The train had entirely disappeared, and Nell turned into the room again.

Eleanor Carradus! Was she dreaming?

The wild hope that leaped up tumultuously at the first mention of the name had died down as if shot dead at the completion of the sentence.

But still it died hard, and she leant eagerly forward listening, and when, the reading ceased, Mr. Glyn laid the Will down on the table, she did not seem to quite understand.

"Then what is I to hev, Mr. Glyn?" asked Maria as he stopped. She planted herself before him, with her hands on her hips.

"I will explain it all shortly," he replied steadily. "You,

William Carradus, take this house and garden with the sum of £2,000. You, Joseph Carradus, grandson of the deceased, take all the business of the rope spinning, together with £2,000 additional capital, on condition that your son John becomes equal partner at the age of twenty-one years, and that he becomes sole proprietor of the business at your death."

Jo nodded.

"And to his grandson Reuben the testator leaves a legacy of £2,000, and the rest of the property he has left absolutely to me in trust, for the sole benefit of the orphan daughter of his late son, Richard Carradus. She, I understand, lives in Germany, and her name is Eleanor Carradus."

"And for me, lawyer?" again asked Maria, and Nell glanced up at her mother's face apprehensively, for she appreciated the tone.

"The testator has not mentioned you at all, or your family," was the reply. Mr. Glyn was determined that she should thoroughly understand, and he began folding up the will as he spoke.

Nell sat back with a sudden feeling of sickness.

It was dead, that wild hope; there was another Eleanor Carradus, and she—— But she could not think for a moment, for her mother put her hand out as the lawyer rose.

"No, George Glyn!" she cried in a high-pitched voice. "Oh no, you don't! You don't go until I've hed my say! You've hed yours for half an hour.—So there's nowt for me, did you say?—nowt?"

Mr. Glyn bowed gravely.

"Then you're a liar, Geordie Glyn!" she shrieked. Nell rose. "Now ger out, lass, and let me speak!" and she pushed the girl aside. "Oh!" she screamed, looking round. "It's a plot. You're ivery yan on ya thieves and robbers. I'll hev t' law on ya a'. There's better lawyers in Farbiggin than thee, George Glyn! Curse him, curse him! Dead, is he? Blast his soul!"

"Mrs. Carradus!"—the voice was firm and quiet—"be careful how you swear before the Almighty. Nothing more

can be done. A will is a will. No words of yours or mine can alter anything. You had better go quietly home. Eleanor"—and he looked at the girl with a certain sympathy in his face—"Eleanor, take her home."

But the woman was not so to be silenced.

"Eleanor? Nell, does ta mean? What's she got to do with ma? There seems to be another Eleanor to turn my dawghter out of her awn. My dawghter to walk in rags, and this foreigner——"

Janet rose also; she thought she might help matters.

"Oh, aye, Janet Carradus. You have feathered your nest finely! We kna what comes of them as is sa kind and lovin'! Oh eye, d—n tha! But I'se be even wi' ya a' yet; and, by the Divil, it's a sham'—a cursed sham'!"

But Nell's cheeks were flaming. She felt wildly that her mother was right. It was a shame. Were all the others to turn rich, while she walked the gutter? On her mother she looked with utter contempt, and she felt bitterly the humiliation of belonging to her—shamed that a gentleman like Mr. Glyn should be sitting looking so calmly at them both. It was maddening that he should see the tragedy of her life. Still, for all that, this thing was a shame, and a fierce hatred rose up in her heart against that other Eleanor, who was robbing her, and she turned indignantly on the lawyer.

"Sir," she said, laying hold of her mother's arm, "my mother is reet. It is a sham'—oh, it is, it is! And, what's more, Mr. Glyn, you think saa too!"

She looked at him steadily, and he was struck afresh with her strong, blazing beauty and commanding power. Her steady look of inquiry actually forced him involuntarily to give an acquiescent nod to her last sentence.

"Mother, let's gaa. This is no spot for us. Coom!"

Then the pitifulness of the disappointment surged over her, and she said brokenly, "Oh, Mr. Glyn, can't you do something? Can't you? Is it really true? Nowt? Nowt?"

And again the compassionate look crossed his face.

"My dear, nothing. I am quite helpless."

"Coom on, mother. Good neet!" cried the girl as she pulled her mother along with her. "Coom along, mother. There's nowt else to do," and she laughed hardly and recklessly.

Out the two went, and down the road Maria Carradus mockingly proclaimed her position to all her acquaintances.

"Nowt, nowt! We'se gitten nowt! Curse him!"

Nell in vain tried to control her; she broke away, laughing loudly.

"Ger oot, lass! I'se off for a drink." So away she went to drink and drink for the rest of the evening.

But the girl turned slowly homewards in a kind of mad dream.

"Why, Nell!"

It was Dicky.

"Eh, Dicky lad, ger oot; I'se mad—mad! He's niver left us a hawpeth!"

"Oh, Nell, then thoo can't be a lady efter a'!"

"Lady!" and the girl laughed loudly. Then, seizing Dicky's arm, she pointed up to the brilliant sky which had already donned its evening gown. "I might ha' been like yon—clean and bonny!" she cried wildly. "Ah! I might ha' been; but I'se hev to content mysell," and the girl pointed down to the muddy roadway. "Nell Carradus was born for t' muck!" and she kicked up a great splash of watery mud with her foot.

Dicky looked at her oddly. He certainly did not quite understand, so he tried his own solacing thought, for he had no other, and said almost affectionately—

"Niver heed, Nell darlin'! What's the odds?"

Ah, what were the odds? Nell only wished that she knew.

CHAPTER XIV

THERE was a good deal of suppressed excitement noticeable at the Grosherzoglichen Hof Theater on the night of the concert given by the Conservatoire students.

Quite apart from the general agitation and heart-burning usual on these occasions, the students knew that Fräulein Hilliard was leaving for England, and this was to be her last concert.

The idea of one of themselves coming into a fortune was most inspiriting, and that it should be die kleine Engländerin for whom they had all recently felt so distressed, was an added satisfaction, and every one agreed that some show of congratulation must be made during the concert.

Eleanor had recovered her equilibrium, and events were gradually convincing her that, whatever might be the worry connected with the inheritance of £100,000, it was certainly extremely interesting to have £50 to do exactly what she liked with, with the comfortable understanding that she might have more when that was spent.

She had written to England to say that she hoped to come to Farbiggin the week before Whitsuntide, as she knew of an escort as far as London on that date.

So all was fixed, and she was now engaged in clutching at the delights of the present under the dream-like feeling that everything had suddenly become unreal and almost strange.

Eleanor was a good deal surprised at the sensation that her change in fortune had made. All her friends were so charmed on her behalf and so hearty in their congratulations that it seemed quite hopeless to expect any commiseration, so she was obliged to keep any melancholy thoughts she might have to herself.

Kätchen entered into the spirit of the circumstances most enthusiastically, and she and Eleanor passed many delightful hours in earnestly considering the choice of gifts for all the innumerable friends with whom Eleanor was determined to leave a souvenir.

Her correspondence with England continued, and she discovered that Mr. Glyn was not nearly so terrible as she had imagined, but wrote most kindly, and took an almost fatherly interest in her wishes, seeming entirely to comprehend what a pleasure it would be to her to give without stint to those who had been so kind to her in the days of her distress and poverty.

So more cheques arrived from England, and the Herr General was again called upon to change them, and the consultations gradually solidified into gifts of the most varied descriptions.

So well was the students' secret kept, that Eleanor had not the slightest premonition that anything special regarding herself was to take place.

She was, however, nervously excited over the serious part she had to take in the programme, for, beside the Toten Tanz with the orchestra, she was down for an Étude, and a Nocturne of Chopin.

The house was crowded, and of course the Gross Herzog was present with his wife, for they always took the keenest interest in what went on at the Hof Theater, and Musik Schule students would have felt very flat indeed if their expected patrons had not honoured them by their presence.

Herr and Frau General von Hervart had been specially invited into the Court Box, and when Eleanor came forward to make her courtesy, first to the Grosherzog and his wife, and then to her audience, she felt comforted with Frau von Hervart's encouraging glance.

The general audience was a mere dream to her, but she caught a good-natured smile from Kätchen, who was seated amongst the chorus at the back of the stage. She also became immediately conscious of the Herr Professor, whose look told her that this was a business occasion, and there was no room for stage fright. Yet, as she stood there acknowledging the tumultuous applause with which she was greeted, she suddenly seemed to feel herself encircled by the long-past, by the spirit of her own parents who had stood on those boards, playing to

many of the same people, so often in the old days, now over for ever.

"Goldengel" she looked, in her simple white silk gown trimmed with some beautiful lace which Frau von Hervart had given her as a farewell gift. The golden head and the excited pink of her cheeks supplied quite sufficient colour without other adornment, and she did not even wear a flower.

Herr Professor Meyer allowed a few moments for the students' greeting, and then he rapped his desk imperatively.

At the sound Eleanor turned into the student again, and sat down promptly.

She had not worked in vain for all these years, and the audience was musically charmed with her performance; the orchestra joined heartily in the demonstration when she had finished, and Eleanor retired with great relief until her turn came again.

"The child has real talent," remarked the Grosherzog. What a pity that she should sink again into an English amateur!"

But the Grosherzogin was of the opinion that it was better for the gold and the pink to be safely protected by English friends.

"Certainly, certainly," her husband agreed. "It is better, but it is still a pity. I must see her before she leaves to-night."

There was so much fun and nonsense proceeding behind the scenes, that when Eleanor was called up a second time, she appeared with the laughter quivering on her face, and she had the greatest difficulty in controlling herself as she stepped to the front.

Seeing such manifest signs of the naughty, nonsensical Eleanor they had known so long, the students burst forth with renewed applause, in which the audience, catching the affection, joined.

But Chopin soon quieted her nerves, and those of the house generally, and as the last note died away, every one acknowledged that the Engländerin was mistress of her art.

She rose, bowed right and left, and turned to go.

"Einen Moment," said Herr Professor authoritatively, and Eleanor, with surprise, waited obediently.

Immediately a little girl student came forward, staggering under an immense bouquet of roses and forget-me-nots which she handed to the astonished Eleanor.

And then the Herr Professor turned to the audience and explained that this Schülerin was leaving for England, though she had been born and had lived all her life in the Vaterland, and that the students had wished to give her some small remembrance of themselves, whereupon he handed her the first volume of the complete works of Goethe to take home with her to England.

Eleanor took the beautifully bound volume from his hand, quite speechlessly, and this action seemed to be the signal for another demonstration, which was only brought to a close by the Herr Professor tapping his desk.

Instantly the chorus rose, and accompanied by the full orchestra, the students paid Eleanor the delicate compliment of singing in English the old tune of "Should Auld Acquaintance be Forgot."

Eleanor stood transfixed, with a bouquet in one hand and the Goethe volume in the other. She tried not to think, and her whole frame quivered with excitement.

What was this tune they were singing? How soon would it be over? This tune which brought her father's playing and her mother's voice so near to her, she almost felt as if her mother were singing close behind her, and she turned half involuntarily, but it was only the voice of a young English girl sitting next to Kätchen.

"For the sake of Auld Lang Syne."

Then it was over. Now what was she expected to do?

Eleanor's knees began to tremble violently, and she was looking helplessly and pathetically at the Herr Professor, when a sudden inspiration seized her. She put down the flowers and the book hastily, and pushing back the straying hair from her forehead, reseated herself at the piano.

The magical charm of the old Thüriger Wald in which she

had so often wandered with her parents, and romped and played with her Weimar companions, swept over her.

She also could pay compliments.

So tenderly and feelingly "Der Jager Abshied" by Mendelssohn sounded out from under her fingers. How often the merry-making students had sent the echoing "Lebe Wohl" wandering in and out amongst the pine forest hills!

So the room was quiet and sympathetic, as Eleanor made the piano ring out and sob her farewell.

No words were needed. Her touch was eloquent enough, and when the last pianissimo "Lebe wohl, du schöner Wald" stole forth through the room, the Engländerin had said her farewell.

At any rate she thought so, for, as she lifted her hands from the keys, she jumped up and ran off like a hunted deer from the platform amidst the cheers of the house.

But the Herr General came down to find her, and carried her off, at the desire of the Grosherzog and Grosherzogin, up into the Court Box, where she remained for the rest of the concert, receiving the kindly remarks and compliments of the august old couple with shy demure appreciation; and when the Grosherzogin, Royal Princess as she was, removed a little circle of pearls from her finger and presented it to the girl, Eleanor could only courtesy modestly as she thanked their Highnesses, and explained to them with näive enthusiasm that such a ring was too beautiful for her.

But the Grosherzog laughed kindly, and remarked that the people in England must not think anything too beautiful for a Weimarin.

The next day was Saturday, and as Eleanor was leaving Weimar on the following Monday, there was much packing and arranging and private farewell taking, and Frau von Hervart shone in her patient, easy consideration for the girl whom she had so kindly taken under her charge.

Perhaps the farewell to Herr Professor Meyer was one of the hardest bits of leave-taking that Eleanor had yet come upon. He had always been such a true friend to her. Kind,

cross, irritated, enthusiastic in turn, he seemed as though he had put his very self at her disposal, and had allowed her to see and know, and partly understand his various moods, disappointments, and surprises, as she pursued her musical course.

Gradually a subtle world of musical intelligence had opened out into existence between the young, eager girl and the crabbed old Professor, and the pupil had become so accustomed to falling in with the mind of the master, that the breaking away to carry forward the music, and in fact the whole of her artistic self independently, was at once a disruption and a pain.

"And so the child leaves the old man?" said the Professor rather pathetically, and his eyes grew big with tears.

"Oh don't, dear Herr Professor!" cried Eleanor; "it is Aufwiedersehn, Aufwiedersehn, not farewell you know! And I shall carry you in my heart with all the music, for wherever the music goes in my life, there will also be the dear Herr Professor!"

"I thank thee, child!" he returned apologetically—"there, thou wilt think that der alte Professor is grown foolish in his old age. But he has a heart, and wishes his little one much happiness—and child! when Die Liebe comes, I pray God that thou mayest recognise her, and take her to thy heart. This is my prayer for thee, and should Die Liebe only give thee pain, and thou shouldest become lonely in thy England, and shouldest need warm loving hearts to comfort thee, come to the old Professor and his wife, and they will make thee welcome for the sake of the children who are no longer there!"

He took her hand between his great palms and raised it to his lips.

"Ich danke Ihnen, tausend, tausend mal," cried Eleanor, much touched. "Oh, Herr Professor, life is really a terrible undertaking: I wonder how people put up with it at all!"

She looked so annoyed over the matter, that Herr Meyer laughed.

"I know not, child, myself why we put up with it, but we do, and each one starts afresh with the great idea that for him or for her life holds more than for the others. I have thought sometimes that this must be because these hearts are really stretching across to the other life though they understand it not—that this life is but the beginning, at least I suppose it is, and the end. Ach, there is no end! So hope on, child, and love, love, love. Always love, for der liebe Gott—He himself is Die Liebe!"

"We are philosophers, you and I, Herr Professor!" said Eleanor, smiling wistfully.

"Yes, child. The old think that they are true philosophers, but this is not so. Oh no! It is the children who are the true ones. Even Der Herr Jesus acknowledged that! So keep thyself a child!"

"That is hard for me, for I feel so old, old—oh you cannot imagine how old I feel!"

The old man looked at the girlish figure before him, and laughed scornfully.

"Old, child? Well, be it so! But remember that thou art still my Schülerin, and even in that England, I shall perceive it whether thou art doing thy duty or not. Himmel! if thou dost degenerate into an Englishwoman with the music! Remember thy Cramer, and thy Gradus, and if thou growest wooden, and monotonous—Ach, thou wilt receive no welcome again in thy Weimar. It is die Liebe, the Magic, the Possession, that the Musik Gott wants; and child, child, keep thy fingers loose!"

It was Eleanor's turn to laugh, and smilingly they parted, only to clasp hands once again for a moment in the old Stadt Kirche on the following day.

In spite of a good resolution to the contrary, Eleanor had the greatest difficulty in keeping her feelings from getting the better of her as she attended the Stadt Kirche for the last time.

The dingy old church was crowded with memories.

How well she remembered those baby days when her

parents took her with them, after so many warnings and injunctions respecting behaviour !

How she used to twist herself round, and nod at the boys in the organ loft, and gaze at the back of the Herr Professor who was conducting—let her father pull her round facing the preacher as often as he might !

Then there came the days when she went with her mother alone, for there was no father.

She remembered also the solemn day of confirmation, when she stood with her school companions answering the questions of the solemn black-gowned Herrn Predigers, her clear eager voice penetrating even to the most distant and dust enveloped corners of the old place. How proud the fair English mother had been of her little German daughter! And what a long period that was when she slipped into the Kirche alone, and listened hard that she might carry away in her head the sermon to the mother lying at home : and then there came those latter days when there was no mother any more. And since then, though Eleanor came to church regularly, she had lost her interest in the sermons. What did they matter any way now?

And to-day as she sat up in the dark corner of the high pew, with Frau von Hervart sitting beside her, and Kätchen beyond, she had no intention of paying the least attention to the service. The singing of the slow choral soothed her, but her thoughts were soon flying up and down her life, past and future, for at the moment the present seemed non-existent.

The preacher was an intensely earnest man, celebrated in the neighbourhood for his eloquence, and Eleanor had certainly seen with a faint amount of satisfaction that it was his turn to take the sermon.

She had settled herself, however, comfortably in her corner with her hand half resting against a marble relief, and had absented her mind as far as possible, when she was suddenly recalled to the present, as a yearning break in the voice of the preacher penetrated through the wanderings of her mind, and forced itself on her attention.

"Ach die Mutterliebe!" Eleanor started as if she had been struck.

"Yes, my friends, the Mother-love of the dear Gott. Think of it!—Mother-love! 'As one whom his mother comforteth, even so will I comfort you.' I—that is the Lord God himself—we know Him as the Father; but do we know Him as the Mother, my dear ones?"

Eleanor's resolutions sank helpless before the impassioned appeal, and Frau von Hervart could only put her arm tightly round the girl to still, if possible, the inarticulate sobs which convulsed the slender frame.

Escape was impossible, and Eleanor could have raged at the man who continued his sermon so remorselessly on the one subject she had been trying so hard to forget. She seemed bound to listen in spite of herself.

"Dear friends, the world is often dark, and hard, and the path is rough, and as we grow older we think that the Herr Gott also grows as hard as the path we are treading. But this is not so. This is a devil's lie! The Herr Gott is the same now as He was when we were children. 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.' 'Yea, as one whom his mother comforteth, even so will I comfort you.'

"Look up, my weary children. Smile once more. Put out your tired arms and feel if haply you may find Him. Though all hell should war against you, though you should be a stray wanderer on the face of the earth, remember that there yet remaineth the Mutterliebe Gottes!"

Eleanor gradually grew calmer. Perhaps the preacher was right. Was the Herr Gott so very near after all? As near as Frau von Hervart, who still held one of her hands in hers?

If she were really sure of this! If it were true that she could stretch out her arms to this Godlike Mutterliebe!

But was it there?

Eleanor had suffered much in her young life, but she had perhaps never felt her absolute isolation so keenly as during the last few weeks.

It was as if what every one else called happiness and luck had come to her, and she had no one to tell it to. She was called upon to bear independence and wealth all by herself, and she had been struggling bravely with the burden.

And now the preacher put into words the whole position.

Yes, she knew it. He was right! It was the Mutterliebe she was yearning after. But was the preacher right as to the rest? Was it possible that she might take the Herr Gott as a mother to whom she might confide all her girlish hopes and fears?

Surely this was quite impossible.

Still, she was comforted, and when the sermon came to an end, and the grand old invigorating hymn of Luther's, "Ein Feste Burg ist Unser Gott," swept through the church, it seemed as though some great weight of life's responsibility had been rolled off her shoulders; and at any rate she was able to smile very happily in response to Herr Meyer's farewell greeting.

During the last of the light on that spring Sunday Eleanor slipped away by herself to pay a final visit to the Friedhof or Garden of Peace, where her parents were lying side by side under the old cedar.

Farewell is quickly said. A short earthly word, yet nearly akin to the eternal language.

"Farewell," the girl whispered as she knelt by the grave. The tragedy was, that there was no answer. Farewell, without the answering wish from the beloved ones. Oh that she could have heard ever so faint a "Fare thee well." It would have given her courage for the life she was now entering upon.

But she heard nothing from across that imperceptible chasm which we know exists, yet can neither see, feel, nor measure, which glides remorselessly in between what we call life and death.

"Farewell, farewell," she whispered again. She dared not linger. The importunate Present and Future seemed to be dragging her away out of the arms of the beloved Past. "Oh yes, I am coming!" she ejaculated, and she rose almost as if

she had caught a glimpse of those unknown guides through the mist of her own blinded eyes.

Yet that was no angelic visitant walking down the little path towards her, but only the Friedhof attendant.

Eleanor knew the quaint old man well.

"I am going away now, Herr Friedrichs!" she said simply. "I wanted to see you once again. You will care for the grave always for me, will you not? I have told you everything I wish."

"Das gnädige Fräulein will find that all will be as beautiful as if she were there herself!"

"Oh, I know it will be so! And you will put the flowers as they bloom in their season?"

"Das gnädige Fräulein shall not be disappointed."

"And in the winter when the snow falls and covers the grave, you will not put any more flowers. My father and my mother both loved the snow."

Again the old man bowed.

Eleanor was glad that the man's presence prevented further leave-taking, and she walked away with him down the path.

"If das gnädige Fräulein would care to take one last look at the tombs of Goethe and Schiller?"

Eleanor did not feel at all inclined, but to please the old man she acquiesced.

It certainly did seem strange to think that her parents were resting so near the great ones whom, as a loyal Weimarin, she had learnt to revere with an almost adoring respect.

So she paid her last tribute, and Herr Friedrichs broke away some leaves from the dry wreaths scattered on and around the tombs and placed them in her hands.

"And das gnädige Fräulein will remember the great Goethe and Schiller in England?" he said wistfully.

"You need not fear," she replied, smiling; and then she added, "but perhaps I shall remember more your kind sympathy with me."

"Ach, that was nothing—nothing," he returned, greatly

embarrassed. "It was your good kind lady mother who came to old Friedrichs in his hour of trouble and grief. May der liebe Gott have you for ever in His keeping!"

The girl put out her hand, and then turned hastily away.

CHAPTER XV

EDWARD RYDER GLYN considered that he was fully justified in allowing himself to feel bored at the idea of Eleanor Carradus's entrance into his home.

He was socially extremely indolent, and indulged himself in the lamentable idea that he must get "something accomplished, something done" every day of his life. He also was fully convinced that he himself alone knew what that something ought to be.

He therefore lacked both the desire and the ability to laze, and was possessed with the idea that the new-comer, if she did nothing worse, would most certainly waste his time.

Ryder had the habit of pursuing his onward way steadily, and with a certain passion for observation, he looked at all events with a fierce determination to see everything and to let no possible morsel of existence-phase slip past him unmarked. In a word he took life seriously, whether he were engaged in playing a game, preaching a sermon, preparing a debate or making a joke.

At college he had the reputation of being a humorist, yet how he got it was a puzzle to many of his friends. Possibly he might be described as an intermittent wit, for he had wonderful talent for elaborating a certain dry humour into absolutely sparkling impromptu, which won for him at the Cambridge Union the reputation of being a wit of the first water. And he certainly was fully capable of seeing the humorous side of life when he gave himself time to do so; and when he had found it he admired it immensely and put away the particular train of events into the back of his mind

for future reference, for he had a prodigious memory and a rapid power of assimilation. Sometimes, however, he seemed actually too absent-minded, too engrossed with his own immediate intention to notice the shafts of sunlight which wit flashes from time to time through the heavy earth-laden dulness. But being vastly appreciative, he weighed and admired all the humour he had time to observe, regarding it as a precious treasure; but it often needed Mary's readier mind to recall him to the position of seeing that which he actually desired and intended to see. When he looked, there was no doubt that Ryder saw, but Mary saw without looking.

So he set his mind on his business, on games, on the Green Dragon, on his Father's Mission and Sunday School, on The Scarth, on the world in general; and finding that such small affairs occupied him fully, dawdling and small talk worried him.

It might be imagined that in games, at any rate, Ryder relaxed his attitude; but even this was not so, for he had never, perhaps, really "played" a game in his life. He had always toiled at them as if the fate of the entire nation depended upon the result of the game or the development of his muscles.

"My dear boy," said Mary, on the afternoon when Eleanor Carradus was expected to arrive, "you are just a little too active-minded. You are rather strong meat for some of us!"

"Am I?" he returned, without noticing his sister's tired expression, for he had been arguing hard ever since afternoon tea, not with Mary, but in Mary's presence, against some foe or foes non-present and unknown. "Well, you know, it can't be helped. We must get on! Oh the pushing that is required in this slow-moving world! And as for Farbiggin, I do believe, Mary, it is the sleepiest and most prejudiced and inefficient hole the soul of man could imagine! Now consider for a moment the attitude of the Town Council towards——"

"Oh, my dear Teddie, don't begin on the Corporation at this hour! That is such an interminable subject. I know that you ought to be going!"

"Oh, there is plenty of time and the train is sure to be late."

"Yes, but you have a habit of missing trains," persisted Mary, "and you ought not to risk missing father. I wonder how he has got on with the fair Miss Carradus——"

"Do you know," remarked Ryder, raising his long length from out of a great armchair, "I think that this business is a huge mistake. I do indeed. I think home-life should be sacred. I never thought that we should ever have condescended to paying guests!"

Ryder was not handsome, but he was tall and well formed, with a figure firmly knit together. His hair was light brown, with a hint of waviness, and he made up for his want of classical outline by his bright healthy complexion and particularly clear grey eyes.

He still erred on the side of youngness, but, as Mary candidly informed him, he would grow out of that in time. As she looked up at him as he stood with his hand resting on the back of the couch, she wondered—what many a sister has wondered before. But she kept her thoughts to herself and pushed him away.

"Do go, Teddie, and don't stand there soliloquising, or you will be reduced to the carriage! You know you have missed people several times to my knowledge, and I should not dare to say how many times when you have not told me!"

Ryder drew up his shoulders and laughed shortly. "All right, Polly dearest—well, goodbye. Behold the Martyr!"

"There is nothing in the slightest degree martyr-like in meeting a charming heiress at a station not a mile off on a beautiful fine spring evening, you ridiculous boy. Oh, do go!"

So he went, and arrived five minutes too soon, and buying an evening paper became so absorbed in the political situation that the train was in the station and rapidly emptying itself on to the platform before he realised with a sudden start that he was there for a particular purpose.

He stuffed the paper into his pocket and fled wildly up and

down seeking the travellers. He soon perceived his father, and next moment he was shaking hands with Eleanor.

"My son Ryder!" said Mr. Glyn shortly. "Take Miss Carradus to the carriage; I shall find the luggage better myself."

Ryder was about to protest, but remembering his manners, he escorted the girl quickly out of the station.

"This way," he remarked, pushing past the ticket collector.

"Oh, my ticket," said Eleanor, rather tremulously; "Mr. Glyn——"

"Oh, don't trouble about it," interrupted Ryder. "All right!" he added cheerfully to the collector. "Mr. Glyn has the tickets."

"Quite right, sir!" was the response.

Eleanor dimly wondered at the unofficial character of the proceedings on English railways, and sank back with a sigh of relief into the comfortable carriage as her companion departed to help his father.

So she was at Farbiggin at last, and in a few moments she would see her future home.

"Are you coming? asked Mr. Glyn of his son as the porters were bringing up the luggage.

"No, father, I shall walk, but I shall be home almost as soon as you. I hate the carriage," he added apologetically to Eleanor.

In a few moments the carriage door was shut and they were driving rapidly down the street, through the main Farbiggin thoroughfare, which was steadily filling up with the usual evening crowd.

Eleanor looked out eagerly, but she could gather very little idea of the place during the short journey. It seemed but a few moments and then the horses turned suddenly to the left, and from the High Street itself they passed through a high old-fashioned archway directly into The Abbey grounds. Another moment and they were at the front door.

"Here we are at last!" said Mr. Glyn kindly. "I am sure that you must be very tired! Never mind the luggage, it will

be looked after without us at last. Come, I want to introduce you to my daughter at once, and then you will know us all."

Eleanor followed meekly. It was wonderful how meek she had become during these last few days. She hardly knew herself, and felt as if she would like to get away quite alone and scream. The fates, however, had been against such an indulgence. They crossed the wide tiled hall into the drawing-room, where Mary was lying in her usual place near the window. She looked up eagerly as the door opened.

"Here we are!" said Mr. Glyn cheerfully as he bent to kiss his daughter. "I have brought you an excellent traveller, Mary! At last, Miss Carradus, you see the one with whom you have had so much correspondence."

Mary held out her hand to Eleanor, who came close up to the couch.

"I am glad that you are here safely, dear. I am sure that you must be dreadfully tired! Was my father nice to you?"

Eleanor could not help smiling in response.

"Oh, very kind indeed! And really I am not at all tired—not in the least!"

"But she must be very hungry," put in Mr. Glyn.

"Oh no! really!" expostulated Eleanor politely.

Mary laughed. "Father is always very distressed at the idea of any one being hungry. I expect he is feeling the pangs himself! Never mind, father dearest! dinner will be ready almost immediately; and I told them to give you a cup of tea in your room, Miss Carradus. That will refresh you There is nothing in the world like the all essential tea!"

Eleanor again smiled in response to Mary's infectious brightness, and to her smile she added half shyly, "Thank you very much indeed."

Mary made a rapid survey of the girl, and in her own mind at once decided that she must give full measure of cordiality, and that promptly, in order to force an immediate surrender. And when Mary put forth her best endeavour, whether to charm or to go her own way, it was hard to withstand her.

"Do sit down a moment! Yes, have I not a sweet view?

One cannot see the dear old hypocrite of a sun slip away to bed, for we face east and north—but do look at the reflection of the toilet he has evidently been indulging in to-night! He is often a terrible dandy in this part of the world."

Eleanor looked out at the subdued light on the ascending distance. "Yes, it is very pretty. You have a lovely view!"

"I do not think, dear, that Miss Carradus had better wait to admire the prospect," struck in Mr. Glyn. "I am quite sure she must be tired."

"Of course," his daughter replied. "But I am only waiting for Madge, father; she will be in any moment. Madge is my maid, a really comfortable old personage, so you must ask her for anything you want. She has been greatly looking forward to another young lady. She still thinks me one, you know! Here she is! Ah, Madge, I am glad you are come. This is Miss Carradus. I have told her that you will look after her. You must explain to her our little ways. You may even tell her how very nice we all are, if you like!"

"There is not a nicer family in all Farbiggin, Miss!" said Madge soberly to Eleanor, taking Mary's nonsense in all seriousness.

"Or a more conceited one!" put in Mary. "Never mind, Miss Carradus, we are all going to do our best to like each other, are we not?"

"Oh yes," said Eleanor, and she looked down on the sweet-faced woman on the couch. What was it she saw in the face that compelled her to continue her gaze? A Madonna face, the Herr Professor had said. Yes, surely he was right, and more than right. The Professor had only seen in his young pupil, with her delicately cut features and deep, happy eyes, the type of the girl Madonna as she appears in the first blush of the glory of her possession of the child Christ, before the sword pierced her soul.

But Eleanor looked down at a face on which, above the deep shadows painted by a tragedy of pain and sorrow, the peace of God rested shining; and as Mary returned the wistful gaze of the stranger girl, it seemed as though a protective

lovingness sprang to life in the deep brown eyes, and Eleanor wondered vaguely whether she had again on earth found Die Mutterliebe.

Mary knew not that her face shone, but she noticed the quivering lips, and instinctively she hastened to change the current of the girl's thoughts, and she was therefore glad of an interruption.

"Ah, here is Ryder! Well, and did you meet them? You know, Miss Carradus, my brother is a sad scatterbrain. He needs all my staidness and sense of regularity to keep him in any kind of order! Now I want to know—did he really meet you? I mean properly? Was he looking out for you? Did he actually open the carriage door?"

"Well," began Eleanor, looking up at the tall young man with a swift perception of the circumstances, "I think that you met us? At any rate you were there when Mr. Glyn was finding the luggage."

"Oh, I know exactly!" retorted Mary. "He had a paper! Now had he not? Yes, there it is sticking out of his pocket! Oh, Teddie!"

"Don't be silly, Mary! I met them all right. I was in heaps of time, only I did not just hear the train come in at the moment!"

Mary was too loyal to let her brother down too hard before an entire stranger, so she suggested that Eleanor should make her way upstairs with Madge and refresh herself after her journey.

CHAPTER XVI

DINNER at The Abbey was always as short as was consistent with Mr. Glyn's sense of the dignity of existence.

Almost every evening there was some meeting of a religious or philanthropic character which he or his son felt themselves bound to attend.

Ryder, it is true, was gradually becoming more discrimina-

ting as to what he let himself in for, and Mary had listened to many complaints and descriptions of what he had suffered from going to "support" affairs in which he himself took but a faint shadow of real interest, and impotently he kept declaring that he would absolutely refrain from going to places in which his mere bodily presence—the actual amount of space which his six-foot frame would occupy—was the one essential point.

From childhood the Glyns had been accustomed to being taken by their father to meetings addressed by worthy and often extremely dull speakers; and Mary had often described laughingly how they had critically eyed the meeting on their entrance, and then sought to spread themselves amongst the general emptiness, so that they might sit at the exact points which would best give a feeling of fulness and encouragement to the platform, and cause the reporter who looked in and sidled out during the first ten minutes to satisfy his conscience when he wrote afterwards that the "meeting was well attended."

Farbiggin was crowded with energetic souls who got up meetings, and the Glyns were exactly in that position which made it most difficult for them without actual discourtesy, or apparent indifference to the innumerable good causes, to decline attendance.

Mr. Glyn especially was so very acquiescent, so ready to oblige, so anxious not to miss the "leading" of God, that he fell an easy prey to their representations, and "deputations" of every conceivable sort found ready hospitality at The Abbey.

Ryder was too much possessed with the desire for definite accomplishment to let himself go quite so easily, and was busy finding out where he at any rate thought he was the most wanted, for he longed to go in and put his shoulder to the wheel himself, to see if perchance he could accomplish some little bit of the world's work without spending all his time discussing the matter.

But the meeting producers yearned for the good old days of

early dinners and high teas, and in fact they many of them considered that dressing for late dinner was the curse of the age.

People, they said, used not to grudge turning out again in an evening to share the joys and sorrows of their fellow-men; but nowadays, when the hard-working upper-middle classes had taken to dressing themselves up for private social enjoyment, there was no doing anything.

Ryder Glyn, on the other hand, yearned for the still older days when the rich lived far closer to the poor, and when even at meal times the great lords and the poor retainers mingled with some degree of sociability.

"We don't eat together enough!" he would argue. "What is the use of an occasional tea-meeting. We stand about and watch the others eat quite different food from what we should have had ourselves, but we don't sit down in our own houses enjoying each other's society."

Arthur Calthwaite, at the Club, mocked Ryder for being what he was pleased to call a Socialist, but there was no one more alive to the essentiality of difference between so-called position than Ryder.

But this did not prevent him from thoroughly appreciating that which was most interesting and effective in any section of society he came in contact with.

If he had conversed with a king, he would have earnestly endeavoured to have got hold of the kingly mind; for as he was possessed of the enthusiasm to be "all things to all men," he was quite ready to climb a mountain peak or descend the deepest mine to gain the particular point of view of the person he was with.

As yet, perhaps the section of Society he least understood was that of young womanhood.

Never having known a mother's love, he had allowed Mary to supply that place during his boyhood. Then when he went to college and experienced a larger life and a wider knowledge he had relegated her to the position of a very kind, but ignorant, unworldly-wise sister, to be of course very dearly

loved, but whose opinion was not exactly one that a young man out in the world could defer to.

Since his return to Farbiggin it was gradually dawning upon him that possibly—only possibly as yet—Mary was capable of walking along the same road as his own wiser self, and at this time he was paying her the compliment of regarding her as a kind of younger brother.

It was, indeed, an immense advance for Mary to cease to be looked upon as a woman by Ryder.

There were, of course, the Vicarage nieces, but they were as yet little more than delightful playthings.

As for the Farbiggin young ladies who studied him as an interesting eligible, he passed them over with supreme indifference, and had actually been guilty of confiding to Mary that when he fell in love he should only need to beckon with his finger and the girl would come.

And Mary smiled, awaiting the denouement.

Mary sometimes sighed at the incessant out-going of her menkind, but she had long ago determined never willingly to stop the active work of the world because of her own infirmity.

"I suppose, father, that you must go out to-night?" she asked as they were seated at dinner. "I rather hoped that, after your journey, you might feel that they could do without you?"

"I am afraid not, dear. I was away last week, and I do not like to break the continuity."

"My father has a men's Bible-class on Friday nights," Mary explained to Eleanor.

Eleanor was not exactly surprised. She was getting used to this man who had been reading his Bible most of the way on the journey, who had already presented her with several little booklets showing the line in which his mind worked, and which she had received with some amount of polite astonishment.

"I am afraid you will find us rather busy people, Miss Carradus," said Ryder. He felt inclined to make it quite

clear from the beginning that she had come into a working household.

"We are just the kind of people, you know, whom every one captures for anything and everything that goes on."

"Oh, I do hope I shall go to some of the things!" she returned, without noticing the slightly warning tone. "I do love going out! Have you many concerts here?" She waited eagerly for the answer.

"There are very good concerts occasionally, and we consider ourselves rather advanced in the musical line," said Mary. "We actually have a Musical Festival once a year, a Choir Competition, an Orchestral Society and Choral Society. But we are not like Weimar, you know!"

"I expect that Miss Carradus has come over with her mind ready prepared to despise the English efforts after music," said Ryder bluntly.

"But why?" she asked quickly.

"Oh, I believe that you Germans think that we are barbarians regarding music?"

"Miss Carradus is not exactly a German, Ryder," remarked Mr. Glyn.

"No, father, but I expect she has imagined that she was wandering back a couple of centuries when she came to England," insisted Ryder.

Eleanor blushed slightly. "He's rather rude, for the first night!" she thought; then aloud, with her most innocent baby expression—

"Then do you consider that you English are as up to date in music as the Germans? I have often wanted to know that!"

Ryder never lost a chance of airing his own views where there was a loophole for an argument, and therefore in a very few moments he was in full cry setting forth his ideas, which on this special subject were rather crude, stating his case, which was drawn more from an intuitive instinct than from any strong foundation of solid fact, and pleading his own side energetically as if he were getting up a case for a barrister

"He is awfully opinionated," thought Eleanor. "He and I shall quarrel, to a certainty. "And so ignorant, or he never could repeat all those absurd statements; and yet they are not wholly absurd—they are clever with that aggravating half-truth cleverness, ever the worst of lies!"

She said very little, only a sentence now and then, just sufficient to fan the flame of her self-made opponent.

"You see," she said at last, "I am sorry, but you have the advantage over me. You English know all our German composers and you have heard their compositions, and you have festivals to produce their works; but we in Germany—we Germans, you know, are not so widely educated. We have no festivals to reproduce the works of your—whom did you say just now could be compared with our Bach, Beethoven, Händel, Schubert, Wagner?"

Eleanor's eyes sparkled, and her words poured forth rapidly.

Ryder moved uneasily in his seat, and looked across at this golden-haired, pink-and-white arguer, and a feeling of honest shame sent a deep blush creeping up under his bronzed complexion.

Mary decided it was time for a diversion, and thought that she foresaw future fireworks.

"My dear Teddie, I am sorry that, for the honour of Farbiggin, Miss Carradus has had the best of the argument. Let us 'continue in our next,' as the magazines remark. Are you going out to-night? or could you spare us the honour of your society?"

"I promised to look in at the Green Dragon."

"Oh, there will be time for that after Miss Carradus and I retire. Come in soon, and wait until after tea. Perhaps, Miss Carradus, you will play to us? You do play, of course?" Mary looked inquiry at Eleanor.

"A little," Eleanor replied mendaciously; then looking across at Ryder with a kind of quizzical challenge she added, "But only German, Russian, French and Swedish music!"

"She is a downright little flirt!" thought Ryder. "She is trying to catch me already!"

Oh, the conceit of the boy! Blaming the woman as usual. For he was caught and chained, and already dragging desperately at the fetters, though he realised it not.

And Eleanor was certainly quite heart-whole, and was only letting off her natural spirits, which had been so artificially controlled for the last few days under the solemnifying influences of her grey-haired guardian, and by a general feeling of fright as to where and how she might find herself.

If she were the Princess to Ryder, she saw nothing in him to give her even a premonition that she had found her Prince.

Ryder protested that he really ought to go, but nevertheless, some time later he appeared in the drawing-room, where he found Eleanor seated on a low chair beside Mary.

Already the two were discussing Weimar and the Herr Professor, and in spite of Eleanor's determination to be very stiff at first and not commit herself, she found that she was confiding all manner of private matters to her listener.

Mary smiled to herself as she listened, but in that smile there was no unkindness—no bitterness, only a faint quivering of wistful sympathy with the youngness of the life spreading itself out so naturally before her.

Mary had seen many heart-leaves turn themselves over before her kindly eye ; she knew exactly when to put her hand to stay or hasten the turning of the leaf, though the heart was seldom conscious of all it was revealing.

"Here is that cantankerous boy!" said Mary as Ryder entered.

Eleanor looked up a trifle bored, for she was enjoying herself.

"I wonder if you would really mind playing us some little thing!" asked Mary. "You don't know what a delight it is to me to think of having the piano freely used again!"

"Oh, I am not tired," said Eleanor politely, making a move.

Ryder strolled forward with a copy of an illustrated paper in his hand, which he laid down by Mary.

"Then do play something," she said. "Teddie, exert yourself and open the piano."

Ryder made a hasty movement and made for the piano.

"Can I get your music or anything?" he asked rather helplessly.

"Lights?" suggested Mary.

"Oh yes, of course! Where do you keep the matches?"

Eleanor looked up amused. She imagined that all men carried a supply of these indispensable atoms.

She jumped up. "Oh, please don't bother! I don't need a light. I'll just play anything I can remember to-night!"

"You may find the piano all wrong. I won't guarantee it. It has never been used really since the winter at our last At Home. Then it got enough to last a season or two. Do you remember, Mary, that old Herr——"

"Oh, a German!" interrupted Eleanor rather scornfully. "Well, I will be careful. You need have no fear."

Mary laughed, but Ryder turned away.

"Now I have made him cross," thought Eleanor. "Oh dear! how shall I make it up! I must be dreadfully ill-mannered, and he's— Never mind, I'll play for that sweet sister."

Eleanor was too much of an artist to be conceited over her playing, and yet she did feel a certain delight in her power that night. For one thing, she was aware that she was giving intense pleasure to Mary, and this was a source of gladness to her kind little heart; and then, from her place on the stool, she could easily see that she was surprising that "conceited boy,' as she mentally dubbed Ryder.

Mary was ecstatic in her approbation, but he said little.

If the truth were known, Ryder was feeling rather small. He was discovering that he had been making a fool of himself, and such a discovery is never very pleasant.

How he had jabbered at dinner. What did he know about music? This slip of a girl had probably done nothing but music all her life. Had very likely meant to take it up professionally if she had not turned into an heiress—a Scarth heiress.

What a sweet face she had!—so wistful—so tender—

He looked again—A half smile. Was there roguery hidden amongst the curves of that little rosebud mouth?

Democrat was he? Then why an indescribable whiff of scorn passing like an autumn wind across his heart as he remembered that she was half a Scarthsider?

He rose to get a book from a little oaken shelf—only Tennyson. And then tea came in and the music ceased, and Eleanor felt a sense of home as Mary asked her to pour out tea. She had not made tea for any one since— But she would not think of that;—that life was passed, and this one had begun.

Eleanor lay wide awake for long that night, listening to the old church chimes as they rang the quarters; and the moon had risen high in the heavens and was flooding the room with her strange ghost-like light before she finally fell asleep.

As for Ryder, he spent the remainder of the evening at the Green Dragon, and when he finally went to his room took a volume of Tennyson's Poems with him, and for the first time in his life understood something of what the poet meant to say when he wrote Maud.

Next morning Eleanor, in the safe privacy of her own room, settled herself to the joyful task of a long letter to Kätchen.

"THE ABBEY, FARBIGGIN.

"YOU DARLING CHILD,—Well, I have arrived, I am actually here, and I am quite ashamed of those scraps I wrote you from London, but hardly know how to begin and tell you all about it. I am, all the same, bursting with what I want to say. It is dreadful, dreadful to have no one to laugh to!

"When funny things happen I keep thinking, 'Oh, how I should like to tell Kätchen that!' and while I am thinking it, I begin to smile and these people must wonder so!

"And they keep calling me Miss Carradus. That is so funny. I never thought how queer it would be, until I heard it from Mr. Glyn when he met me. Why, to change one's name suddenly like that is almost like being married, without any of the fun. For I suppose it is fun being married?

"Well, but to begin properly. You can't think how touched I was at so many coming to the station to see me off. Such crowds and crowds of you, and then the flowers!

"My dear children, what did you expect me to do with that carriage full of flowers? Oh, I do hope you won't all mind when I tell you what I did do.

"I carried them with me into the boat—not one was left behind; then I picked out one flower from every bouquet, and these are in my English room now. Quite faded, but I shall prize them for ever.

"And the rest—well, you know it was night, and as the boat plunged along across the dark water, the wide-eyed moon plunged also along through the great massy clouds overhead all the way along with us, and the clumsy old sea kept laughing back at her with a rippling kind of silvery laugh, and I dropped the flowers one by one over into the shining track, and it is my fancy that I have left a beautiful pathway of flowers between me and the dear Vaterland; and I can never think of the great deep dividing seas without remembering the dainty blossoms trembling on her panting breast in the sparkling moonlight! There! is not that foolish? I wonder what the sober people here would think if I confessed to such nonsense!

"No, I was not sea-sick. But I was awfully excited, for you know I have never seen the sea in my life; and I made my chaperon lie down, for she was terribly bad, poor thing, and then wrapped myself up and stayed on deck the whole lovely night.

"I kept a little Vergissmeinnicht to the very end, and dropped it into the sea just as the boat was beginning to slow off, and, dear Kätchen—I kissed each dear, darling 'Blossomchen' 'Farewell!'

"Mr. Glyn met us at Victoria, and from that hour I was under his charge.

"Oh, he did frighten me! I have not got over it yet. He is so dreadfully polite, and grave and aristocratic, and well-clothed. I did not realise that lawyers were quite like that, but I believe he is different from many.

"We went to a lovely hotel, my first experience of anything so grand, and I hardly dared find my way down the great wide stairs to *table d'hôte*. I felt as if I ought to apologise to the servants and waiters for my insignificant appearance.

"We stayed, as you know, a few nights in London, and you would have laughed if you had seen my guardian escorting me about and heard him talking to me about things that he thought would interest my infantile little head.

"I can't tell if I have made a good impression. I rather imagine that they all think me a petted baby. And of course I am not. Am I?

"Mr. Glyn had a lot of business at some court, so he introduced me to a queer little lady called Miss Williams, his cousin, and she exhausted herself on my behalf. She informed me that she had a passion for shopping, and she took me all over —to the Stores, Regent Street, Bond Street, Kensington, and I could not tell where. I got rather tired, but it was tremendous fun, and we spent a terrific lot of money. It seemed awful to be spending money like that, but she made me tell her all about my clothes, and somehow I did not mind at all. I have been fitted by tailors, fitted by dressmakers, by bootmakers, &c., &c., and all my own little effects will, I am afraid, disappear from view.

"Oh, and I must tell you the greatest thing of all. Mr. Glyn told me that they rode on horseback a good deal at Farbiggin, and that I had better have a riding-habit! That did make me think of my darling mother's descriptions of her lovely rides in Moorshire. I must confess to you that there is a pleasure in nice things, and also in looking nice. This little lady has no reserve, but kept dilating on my supposed beauties to the various shop-people and even to myself, as if I were a stock or a mere tree.

"At first I blushed with bashfulness, as you can imagine, but I soon became quite hardened. I was really sorry when it was time to leave her. She lives in a charming flat in Kensington. We did not go to the theatre, as I longed to do.

She told me that Mr. Glyn would not approve, and that she only went herself when she thought no one was looking. Isn't that queer?

"It was a long journey here, but we were most comfortable. It is delightful going first class, and doing everything in nice style; and yet when I saw the homely people pushing into the third class carriages I thought, 'Yes, Eleanor Carradus, and you ought to be with them!'

"Oh yes, and Mr. Glyn gave me TRACTS to read! I was awfully astonished. I do hope I shall not shock them all.

"You must not mind my skipping about in this letter. My mind is all on the skip.

"Miss Mary Glyn is really charming. Yes, she is, and you can tell the Professor—with my love—that he was quite right, and that I was quite wrong. I have fallen in love with her. I hope it will last.

"There is a dreadfully conceited brother called Ryder living in the house. I tried to sit on him the first evening, and was rather rude I am afraid, but I think he is one of those insufferable young men who are consumed with a sense of their own importance, and I believe he thinks my advent a bore. One of the regular bother-the-women-kind of young men!

"I think it must be rather a bother, after all, for them to have me here, but I shall soon be of age, and can then go away on my own hook. I must say they are very polite, and treat me as a welcome guest; so your dear Frau Mutter would say I ought to be extremely thankful—as indeed I am.

"There is a lovely view from this window, but I am not good at descriptions.

"I am sure they have given me one of their best rooms. The window is a large bow, and you look out on to a closely shaven lawn—very tidy, with prim flower-beds cut out apparently by the aid of a rule and compass; but right across are some beeches, all freshly covered with their greeny-brown leaves.

"Then there is a low wall, and beyond it a footpath, which

runs on this side of a lazy, dawdling little river, and over on the other side there is another footpath and a low hedge. I can see the white hawthorn blossoms as I write, and beyond again are meadows and real English hayfields, and almost opposite I can see a long shady lane leading over a bridge on to a hill-side; and right on the very top of the hill—think of it, you unromantic Kätchen!—there is a real old ruined castle!

"Fancy anything so charming as that in England! I shall go the very first chance I have and plunge myself into its midst! I can hear you exclaiming at that last sentence, but I can't help it—it is what I mean. Bathe my present-world dull little soul in the atmosphere of the long past, if you like that better!

"I was awake very early this morning, and saw the most exquisite sunrise you could imagine; but I will spare you any more ecstatics.

"I imagine that the town must be all behind somewhere, for there are hardly any houses to be seen from this side.

"The room looks rather bare at present, as my heavy luggage has not yet arrived, but Miss Glyn explained that she thought I would rather have plenty of room for my own things.

"I have had several rather solemn business talks with my guardian. He says that my grandfather was a very respectable working man, and that there are some nice and some nasty working-class relatives in the town, but that my grandfather desired particularly that I should not be intimate with them until I was of age.

"I always guessed at such relations, but the definite news is rather a shock to my feelings, and you know it is quite absurd to think that I shall not come across them. However, I am not going to worry myself at present.

"I feel far more disgusted about my mother's family. Mr. Glyn says he does not think that the Whineries ever knew my father's name, or that he belonged to The Scarth; but he says that my grandfather gambled himself to death, and that everything was sold up, so I shan't be bothered any more with that connection. So I am thankful that, as they did their level best

to break my darling mother's heart, they have never had the chance of insulting me.

"All the same, these complications make me feel a little odd, but I expect everything will turn out right in the end.

"I really must stop, dear, for old Madge, the maid, has been in to say that Miss Glyn is going for a drive, and would I like to go.

"Of course I would, for I am dying to see all the place.

"Please give my very dear love to Frau von Hervart, and remember me most affectionately to Herr General. Please tell him that in my new life I shall not forget all his kind fathering.

"And with much love and many kisses to you—you dear, darling, comfortable old Kätchen,

"I remain,

"Yours always,

"HELENCHEN."

CHAPTER XVII

THE *Moorshire Times* is an enterprising journal, and it was not long before the main details of the Will of John Carradus were set forth, with a few sparkling platitudes on the ups and downs of life, with a quotation or two from Shakespeare to emphasise the authority.

The topic of the Will was naturally extremely interesting, and for a short time became a matter of more than common gossip, not only in Farbiggin, but in the surrounding neighbourhood of Moorshire.

Mary Glyn's callers increased perceptibly, and she was asked many leading questions, which she answered after her own manner.

Of course, on The Scarth every one talked over the Will. In the discussion it appeared that opinions were divided as to its justice. Many thought that Maria had been rightly served, and that she had only herself to blame, and with hard consistency they refused her any pity.

Maria had consequently to put up with a good deal of chaff and jeering as she draggled about The Scarth, more drunken and more foul-mouthed than ever. In the Wild Boar, where she bestowed most of her patronage, she held forth on her grievances at great length, and the landlord, in deference to so good a customer, gave her the house.

"To see t' auld lass at t' funeral dressed sa fine, and wi' black edgin' tull her handkercher, and then him niver leavin' her a fardin'!" jeered a woman.

"Eh, if she'd kent it, she'd ha' given her mind tull't corpse hissell!" said another.

"Eh, Maria lass, Jacky hed t' best o' tha yon time! Thoo 'll ha' to lait some one else to keep tha!" said a man, leering drunkenly at her.

For answer she bestowed on him a sounding box on the ear, as she went forward for another glass.

"And whar did ta git thy brass for thy black, auld lass?"

"Her Uncle Moses 'ull ha' helped her a' ready to find some on it, by t' looks on her!"

And, the drink being in Maria, she joined in the mockery.

"Don't any on you hell divils think as Maria Carradus is short o' brass!" she shouted, jingling some coppers noisily in her hand.

And then the men laughed and humoured her with a certain rough kindliness, and some of her old flames told her that it was a shame that she had got nothing; for then, at any rate, she could have stood them all drinks.

"And now," she retorted, "it's you b—— lot as 'ull hev to stand drinks to auld Maria Carradus. D—— the stingy auld divil!"

And then every one roared again, and thought they were having a fine joke.

But almost all were sorry for Nell. There was something about the girl that compelled interest. Her beauty, her good-nature, her mother wit, her nonchalant tenderness, her generosity, appealed to them; and her very faults—her

passion, her scornful independence, her combativeness—were regarded with a clannish sympathy.

Perhaps the Scarthsiders were the most impressed with the wealth of the dead man, because of the change in fortune and position of William and his two sons, Reuben and Jo.

"A grand house, with no rent to pay, for William, with £2,000 as well; and £2,000 a-piece to his sons, besides t' rope spinning for Jo!"

"£6,000 amang 'em!" said Dicky's mother scornfully to Bella Lancaster. "We'se wetch 'em, and see wedder or nut they git above wi' theersells!"

The neighbours could almost grasp such fortune, and some were very pleased, and others were filled with every-day jealousy. But when it came to considering a sum of £100,000 left to a girl in Germany, imagination failed. The idea was unreal — inconceivable — it savoured of the halfpenny novelette. It was most interesting to discuss, but it did not raise profound feeling, except among a certain class of dogged Socialistic working men who made it a text for earnest debate.

Only at one point the matter touched them. It was one thing to pay rent to "Auld Jacky," but it was quite another to be called upon every week by a smart young clerk from Glyn's office. And that smart young clerk had a weary time on a Saturday, and constantly warned his friends that he would not stand it without a rise. But even smart young clerks considered a long time before they turned rebel at Glyn & Son's office.

Among the girls there was much talk about Eleanor. They wondered what she was like, and what she would do "wi' her brass," and then they fell to discussing the still more interesting subject of what they would do if they had had the windfall.

It was a little pathetic to note that amongst the most to be desired benefits that money would bring were unlimited food, unlimited hats, and unlimited leisure.

Ben Sinkinson, who was a young man much given to calculation, propounded to Jane Ann Martin at the tobacco shop that the heiress would have at least £8 every day of her life! £100,000 was something, but £8 a day was a terrible staggerer to the assemblage.

"And her niver doin' a hand's turn to addle it!" sneered Jane Ann.

"Naá, niver a hand's turn!" Ben responded.

Whitsuntide was a time of very special excitement at Farbiggin. In the first place there is always a joyful feeling of anticipation connected with any holiday period. How the working world toils for the few short holiday hours into which it strives to put so much! And yet, after all, how little, for the most part, is the happiness obtained, and many a wearied holiday-maker would be willing to confess that the anticipation does more good than the final realisation.

However that may be, in Farbiggin a great deal of life seemed to culminate in Whitsuntide. The shops expected a harvest and got it, for many a pound had been carefully saved for the new Whitsuntide rig-out, and on Saturday the town was crowded with farmers and farm servants, the latter walking the streets in the full confidence of a half-year's wage in their pockets.

And all around, in the market-place and in the open streets, the public hiring for the next six months was in full swing. The strong, vigorous-looking men and maidens stood about laughing and chaffing good-naturedly with each other, and they tied themselves up with the most casual confidence for another six months, choosing their masters and mistresses for reasons quite impossible for an outsider to determine. There had actually been known cases in which the hired knew neither the name or the address of the hirer, the only detail of importance being that the farm was up a certain valley and that "they kept thirteen cows."

"Is ta for hire?" the farmer would ask of any likely boy or girl.

But as all of them, whether for hire or not, increased the crowd for the sheer delight of seeing the sight, the reply might be "Why, aye," or it might be "Naá, I'se stoppin' on!" which latter reply meant that the last six months' arrangement had been satisfactory on both sides. If, however, the reply was in the affirmative, a short pointed argument would follow regarding the amount of stock kept, and work expected on the one side and wages required on the other.

Girls, owing to their comparative scarcity, often waxed extremely independent, and had a good deal of their own way as regarded the money asked. Considering the high wages openly offered in the public streets of Farbiggin every six months, it was a puzzle to many how it was that girls in the town did not oftener make a plunge for country life, and leave the sights and smells of the factories for the pure air and healthy life of the hills and valleys.

But even factory girls have their ideal of life, and, having it, they considered that life was more than meat, and to them poverty and squalor, if united with company and fun, were infinitely preferable to the more substantial benefits of high wages, good clothes, and abundant food, if united with country work, country hours, and comparative dulness.

If there was one thing that Farbiggin Scarthsiders loved more than anything else it was company, and if anything they dreaded with a kind of frantic horror it was "quiet."

Besides the Saturday hiring there was also the Saturday fair, and in the afternoon, town and country boys and girls all united in enjoying the bliss which could be found on the Moss Road, and on the wide stretch of rough shingle down by the river.

On this particular Whitsuntide the tobacco shop employés turned out at the usual hour, and all with one accord surged up the street to swell the crowd and see what remained of the hiring.

It was difficult to pass through at all, and carriages and carts could only edge their way in a deprecating manner in and out amongst the imperturbable crowd.

The farmers evidently considered the Farbiggin streets as much their possession as one of their own ploughed fields Nothing could stir them from their strong position, and the argument respecting some bargain would be peacefully continued in spite of frantic shouts and gesticulations from the perplexed drivers. Bicycle bells might ring as they would; they had absolutely no effect whatever, and the rider was forced to descend scowling.

"Coom on! Let's git oorsells hired!" laughed Dicky Dixon courageously.

"What wage is ta exin', my lad?" asked a great stout farmer who had overheard the remark.

Dicky looked up with a face full of innocent simplicity, "Fifteen pound for t' hawf year!" he remarked solemnly.

The man looked down at the boy critically. Then he turned off with a grin.

"I'se exe t' missis wedder or nut she wants a lad to rock oor lile un' creddle!" he remarked scornfully.

Dicky's companions roared. Dicky made some well-accepted gesticulations of extreme contempt behind the big man's back as he departed.

"Hullo!" called Jane Ann Martin excitedly to Nell, against whom she happened to be struggling in the crush.

The crowd was very dense, but it grew worse as a carriage and pair tried to get through the mass of people. Back the crowd pushed, and loud laughing and angry mutterings respecting crushed toes and tumbled head-gear ran round.

Nell looked up, but did not reply.

"Looks ta, Nell. Can't ta see?" cried the girl again. "Why I do believe it's——"

Nell guessed in a moment who it was, but she was not going to discuss the matter with Jane Ann Martin.

And Miss Mary saw the group of young people as they struggled in the crowd, and leant forward with her usual friendly nod and smile. Eleanor, following the direction of her eyes, also saw the group, and wondered.

"Some friends of mine who work in the tobacco factory, poor

children!" remarked Mary. "Many of them live such plucky lives. I expect they are looking forward to a grand time this afternoon at the fair. Ah! I do hope we shan't hear of any of them getting into mischief."

"Mischief?" said Eleanor inquiringly, but Miss Glyn was too busy anxiously watching the manœuvres of Johnson to get through the crowd to reply.

Eleanor was intensely interested in all that she had seen that morning. What a very busy world this seemed to be.

Miss Glyn had been driving her up and down the streets, pointing out all she thought interesting. She had explained to her the hiring, and had taken her down on to the Moss Road to show her the preparations for the grand fair.

She had discussed many social difficulties with her, asking her opinion as if she really thought that she had one; and Eleanor for the first time in her life found herself involved in the consideration of the perplexities and difficulties of a world which she had always thought of, as quite outside and beyond her own personality.

So she was seated very upright and very eager. The wind had blown the light golden hair out from under her hat, and she looked from side to side of the carriage as if she could not bear to miss anything, and when the carriage had passed, the boys and girls followed the bright head with fascinated eyes.

"That's her for sure!" said Ben. "Now, Nell lass, thoo sees thy name sake!"

"She's bonny, any road!" said Jane Ann.

"She's nut sa bonny as t' Bacca Queen!" retorted Dicky.

"What doos thoo kna aboot it?" retorted Jane Ann.

"Well, what will ta bet then?" and Dicky put his hand into his pocket.

"Theer's na need to bet on it! We all kna as there's naá body to beat t' 'Bacca Queen," put in Ben insinuatingly.

But Nell never could stand Ben when he tried to make up to her. Somehow his compliments felt like insults.

"Yon's t' bonniest lass i' Farbiggin, Ben Sinkinson! Thoo

git thisell off and cooart her, theer's a fine lad!" returned Nell jeeringly. And then she pushed her way through the crowd and hurried home.

CHAPTER XVIII

JOHN FLEMING was quite determined that by some means or other he would win Nell Carradus for his wife. He often wondered to himself why he cared so much. The girl was incessantly snubbing his efforts to please her, and he knew all about her disreputable home and bad upbringing, He knew also that the social position of a tobacco girl was, to put the case mildly, but moderate, and yet Fleming had come to Farbiggin to complete his education as a florist before settling down in the country to build up, according to the newest and most advanced methods, the small business which his father at present ran on old-fashioned lines.

A good, steady, respectable working-class stock is an excellent stem on which to graft culture, only a persistent ambition is necessary for full fruition—but then John Fleming was certainly ambitious. For several generations gardening and the culture of flowers had been the family trade, and in John Fleming the trading instinct was developing alongside of the artistic one, and out of the love of flowers arose the love of all beautiful forms, and John Fleming, without knowing it, was rapidly becoming quite an artist.

So, though he loved the little country village of Low Ridding, which was situated twenty miles to the south, he had persuaded his father to let him come to Farbiggin for a few years to gain more experience and to get wider chances of education.

He was making the very best of his opportunities in learning his trade from his master, Mr. Fell, who was a thoroughly practical seedsman and florist, well known up and down the country for his excellence in landscape and other forms of gardening.

Most of his evenings, however, were spent in the Schools of

Science and Art. He grappled with science with the strong determination to overcome his village school handicap, and was ere long looked upon by the master as quite one of the most promising students in the school. In the art department he was conspicuous for his eye for form and precise accuracy in work, and already the master was wondering whether at last he had found a swan amongst a good proportion of respectable but infinitely tedious geese. Poor man, he was so weary of the constant demand for india-rubber, and few would imagine the relief it was to find a student who not only used his eyes and looked and saw what was there, but who had also the ability to put down what he saw on paper without indecision.

Fleming boarded with the Fells, and in ordinary way would have had nothing whatever in common with The Scarth or Scarth-siders. But one day, very soon after his arrival in Farbiggin, he was accidentally drawn into Mr. Glyn's mission room. To a young man fresh from a village, where the good old clergyman's capacity for conducting the public worship of God was limited to great success in sending the worshippers either to sleep or into an advanced state of absent-mindedness, such a service as that of the Scarth Mission was immensely striking.

Being an entire stranger to all forms of what might be termed revival religion, the warmth and the love and the intensity of the service seized hold on him with extraordinary force. Before long he noticed that there seemed to be two distinct lines of thought running through this novel religion.

There was Mr. Glyn's earnest, loving, personal faith and delight in Jesus Christ, and his son's vigorous demand for a real practical outcome, in daily life, of the faith professed. Although quite unable to analyse his own religious standpoint, Fleming was drawn instinctively into connection with the mission, and from thence into the Sunday school, where he became a member of Ryder Glyn's Bible-class.

Now Ryder brought all the powers of a highly cultured mind down into this particular work. To him there was nothing perfunctory, nothing that could be regarded as unimportant in the conduct of a Sunday afternoon Bible-class.

He took hold of the Bible as though he believed it to be the greatest marvel the world had ever seen. While touching it with reverence, he gloried in its worldfulness. He delighted in its age, its poetry, its style, and more than all in its marvellous character delineation, its strong common sense and its freedom from hysteria.

Without exactly intending it, Ryder found himself actively seeking to counteract that hysterical tendency so conspicuous in many efforts like that of his father, for he saw only too clearly that while to some, the system was like life from the dead, to others it contained the poison of self-conceit, self-analysis, and self-glorification, and was often followed by a weakening of the fight against the outward arrays of wrong, and an almost monastic withdrawal of the person into the mystical region of feeling and self-protection.

Ryder Glyn searched his Bible to find God—not morbid self-questioning, not even religion; and before very many weeks had gone by, John Fleming found himself an earnest seeker after God, and followed his enthusiastic young teacher with the deepest attention, obtaining as a secondary result a refinement of culture and taste which a deep thorough study of and intimate acquaintance with the Bible brings. It was at the Sunday school that he met Nell for the first time. She was a regular attender of Mrs. Henry Glyn's Bible-class, but her attendance there would not necessarily have thrown her in John Fleming's way.

During the winter months, however, special social evenings were arranged for by the school leaders, and Fleming and Nell Carradus found themselves in the choir that was formed for the practice of glees and carols.

Catherine Glyn was the choir mistress, and she was not long in perceiving that in Nell, despite her rough manner and independent rudeness, there lay a keen musical instinct which was fast controlling a voice which without it might have turned out strong and coarse instead of rich and melodious.

Nell would romp into the class with a jest for her neighbours, or a loud grumble at the weather or anything else not

exactly to her mind, but she was never absent and never late, and when the class had settled down and the business begun, she watched the directions of the teacher with the utmost attention and became absolutely absorbed in what she was doing, being exceedingly irate if any of the other girls attempted the least disturbance. In fact, Catherine Glyn looked upon her as the policeman of the class.

It was at these practices that Fleming was first struck with the extraordinary beauty of Nell's face and the intense earnestness of her great eyes when she chose to be serious. From his place behind, amongst the tenors, he had full opportunity of examining her face in profile, and for admiring the turn of the head which even the old rough winter jacket and rabbit-skin fur could not wholly disguise.

A natural guess would have been that a girl of Nell's general style would have been distinguished as a contralto, but the charm of her voice lay in the fact that she took high soprano notes with such consummate ease and with such a roundness of tone, that listeners were often quite misled, and if they thought about the matter at all would have said they had been listening to a contralto.

Owning the voice she had, Nell was of course the acknowledged leader of the sopranos, and these singing classes gave her the keenest delight.

Catherine Glyn was, unfortunately, not very musical, but she knew just enough to produce a very agreeable result, and The Scarth Glee Company, as they termed themselves, were extremely pleased with themselves and their productions.

Fleming felt that he got nearer to Nell on these Monday evenings than during those rather awkward occasions when she agreed to go out walking with him. He understood quite clearly that Nell required making. He had a habit of regarding her as a rough sketch, charming in its roughness and charming in its prophecy of what the future picture might be.

But sometimes, as he very well knew, rough sketches never developed into pictures, or if they did the roughness became more exaggerated, to the spoiling of the original inspiration;

so the young man suffered much when he found the wrong side of Nell's character coming out too clearly.

Once or twice she had showed him enough of her real self, or her real self at that particular moment, to give him hopes that the soul within the girl would some day be equal to the beautiful exterior.

So, on occasion, he had taken upon himself to lecture Nell, but she had always turned the remark with a laughing "Ger oot, Jack! Thee fry thy awn fish, and niver heed mine!" or some like mockery.

So he was becoming rather chary of entering into combat with her; yet when he discontinued his lectures she immediately noted the fact, and had lately been taunting him with having given them up.

The actual process of development did not, however, exactly worry or discourage Fleming. Was he not working out his own life on to a higher platform? Then he must surely expect that some corresponding process should go on in Nell. He had learnt to wait patiently for the results of many a floral experiment, and he was willing to wait for Nell, for he saw that the girl was only just awakening, and as he meant to rise himself, so he imagined that Nell was capable of rising with him.

Then, again, in a fit of unusual confidence Nell had once told him the history of her own birth, and Fleming, having a curious strain of imagination running through his apparently rather imperturbable exterior, secretly glorified Nell into the position of a disguised gentlewoman. He perhaps forgot that so far Nell had not come under that influence of all influences for refinement, the realisation of God in her own life; and until she was prepared to let herself go to be moulded by the Divine, she was still like an infant crying in the night, and with no language but a cry. And John was unaware that the vague cry had already ascended from that turbulent heart.

It would be difficult to say exactly how Nell regarded the attentions of her earnest-minded suitor. He was of course far the most important youth seeking her favour; but at times he bored her. She felt when with him that some intangible yoke

was oppressing her, and if she kept company with him one night she chose another squire the next. As she confided to her friend Sarah, "Two nights yan efter t' tudder wi' yon quiet lad is ower many for ma."

Still, she thought of him with a proprietary pleasure, and her disgust would have made itself heard in scornful insinuations if he had in ever so small a degree turned his attentions in other directions, and in her consideration of many passing events she instinctively wondered what "yon Jack Fleming wad think on it."

If he had only known it, Fleming was missing the one royal road to Nell's earnest consideration and possible heart affection by so rigorously refraining from talking about himself and his own affairs. He was too eager to enter into her life, too desirous of showing an interest in her concerns. But she, knowing full well the dulness and the sordidness of her existence, and not yet choosing to acknowledge to him her own overpowering ambitions and strivings, felt bored and oppressed at his solicitude.

But if he had confided to her his ambitions and his strivings, things might have been different. She would certainly have treated them with kindly respect, and she might even have admitted him within the circle of those whom, in her own unique manner, she mothered.

When Nell turned away from the hiring with her mind all full of the sight of Eleanor and Miss Glyn driving in peace and comfort down the street, it was to find her mother lying drunk on the floor, the fire out, and the children wailing.

She gave way to a violent oath, and, banging the door to, she locked it. Quickly she lighted the fire and straightened things up. With a rough but kindly word she quieted the children, giving each a copper with the promise that they might spend the afternoon on the Moss Road.

She took not the slightest notice of the drunken woman, satisfied the hungry children and herself, and then, despatching the children with rejoicing hearts to the scene of revelry, she remained to clear everything up.

And so she found herself alone with her mother and her own heart. Every now and again the woman roused herself and muttered incoherently, but the girl merely went on with her business, washing the floor and polishing the grate, generally doing her best for the place.

When all was comfortable again, she attended to her own person. She put aside the tobacco-reeking garments in which she had toiled all the week, and then, as she would have expressed it, "weshed hersell."

She took down her long masses of hair, brushing them until they shone again, and then wound coil after coil round her head. Happily Nell had an unusual objection to curling-pins, the delight of the mill-girl and the duchess alike. She had noticed that quantities of artificial curls did not become her, and made her look common, and, moreover, that neither Miss Mary nor her teacher tormented themselves or their hair with them, and besides she had plenty of loose natural curlets all round her brow, and these she arranged with dainty skill. She looked at herself critically, but when she caught sight of her tobacco-stained hands contrasting so strongly with the white shapely arms raised to her head, she dropped them with a sudden gesture of impatience. Then an idea seemed to tickle her, for she laughed lightly and, nodding to her own reflection, remarked, "Eye, eye, lady arms and 'bacca lass hands for Nell, and that's how it 'ull be to t' finish!" Then she donned her Saturday frock, and finished herself off with a new white straw hat and a snowy muslin scarf; and after putting the finishing touches, she turned away from the glass and back into the front kitchen, where she stood for a moment meditating as to her plans for the afternoon.

She opened the door and looked out, but there was nothing to see but the dingy houses opposite and the deep blue strip of sky exactly overhead. And there was nothing to hear but the sound of violent quarrelling next door, and the haunting wail of a baby opposite. Nell could not endure to hear a baby cry, so she turned indoors again. There was nothing of interest there, certainly. Her mother was still asleep, and

the girl came close up and looked down upon her. If looks could stab, Maria Carradus would have been a dead woman that bright holiday afternoon.

So she left the cottage, leaving the door closed, with the key inside. She knocked at the opposite house, and received in reply the usual "Coom in!"

"Mrs. Jameson, I'se take it kindly if you'll hev an eye across t' road. She's dead drunk, but she'll last while I get back. Nobbut I'se left t' key in t' door."

Mrs. Jameson looked up. She had a pleasant, wholesome face, but looked worn-out with the care of the wailing infant lying on her knee. "A' reet! Nell lass; oor Sarah 'ull be in directly. She's only gone to get some things for Sunda', and we'll see as naábody meddles wi' t' hoose."

"T' lile 'un is na better?" queried Nell.

"Naá, I can't tell what ails it!"

"Food!" said Nell decidedly.

"Eye happen, but I do my best. T' doctor he says sugar o' milk—but that's brass, brass," and the woman sighed.

"Eh, Mrs. Jameson, it bothers me how you and your Sarah can't think as God cares for workin' folk when he lets their bairns die for want o' t' reet food!"

"Naá, I don't kna, Nell. God help us," said the woman patiently. "The Lord's will be done, Nell. Folk can't go agen t' Lord;" and she raised her baby up to her face and kissed the flabby little cheeks passionately.

"Naábody can say as it's t' Lord's will as yon babby should die o' starvation," said Nell to herself as she hastened down the narrow yard. Then she put her hand into her pocket, and drawing out a handful of change, counted it meditatively. Could she? Why yes; she was well and strong, and could surely do without something or other. She would take good care that her mother got very little off her this coming week, and any way, she need not go all round the fair as she had intended. What about those gloves she had meant to buy? She looked at her hands. "They can wait another week,' she thought to herself, "and happen t' babby can't!"

So she went on to the chemist's and ordered the required sugar of milk and a tin of patent food, and putting down the hard-earned money, directed that they should be sent to Mrs. Jameson's. "And tell t' lad to say as it's no matter wha sent 'em, but as they are paid for!"

And away she hurried off down to the Moss Road to see what was to be seen with the minimum of payment.

Dr. Maddison came into the shop a few moments afterwards, and the chemist, who was a chatty man, told him the little incident, and the doctor went off meditating on the curiosities of humanity.

CHAPTER XIX

THERE was more excitement than usual this year on the Moss Road, and as Nell approached the scene of the fair she could hear the noise from a considerable distance.

What could be more exhilarating than to hear six bands at once, all playing different tunes, and each possessed of a large untuned drum?

Rattles, shooting galleries, cheap jacks, and all sorts of attraction advocates, formed a strong undercurrent to the noise of the bands, while the shrieks from the merry-go-rounds seemed to be little more than strong emphatics of the lesser shrieks of the boys and girls who thronged them.

And it was by no means only the rising generation who took active part in the frivolities. Grown-up people were in strong evidence, taking their pleasure, it is true, in some cases somewhat apologetically, but nevertheless taking it.

What did the tawdriness of the entertainers, or the mud under foot, matter? Every one was quite used to mud, at any rate, and with pockets full of Saturday coppers who could resist going in for all that could be afforded?

Nell found plenty of companions as she strolled up and down; but she would not be tempted into entering any of the booths. No, not even the Variety Entertainment, the Fat

Woman, the Living Mermaid, or the Tortures of the Inquisition, could move her from her steady purpose.

Ben Sinkinson was loudly prominent. Flush of money through some lucky overtime, he was treating gaily, and in his treatings he did not forget, either for his companions or himself, the beer booths, which the magistrates allowed to be erected on the ground.

Year after year the brewers gained the profit from these erections, and the town had to pay the piper when the expenses of the court and jail were reckoned up.

But if the town was contented, the matter could concern no one else, and any Scarthside heart-breaks were of no real importance.

Nell's eyes were opened wider than ever before on this fair day; and as she looked at one after another of her acquaintances as they reeled about in high spirits, and overflowing with noisy mirth and ribald jests, a new disgust seized her, and she shrank back with a strange sensitiveness.

She absolutely refused to be treated by any one.

"Naá, lads! Off wi' ya a'. I hev n't brass to loss misell on this rubbish. It tak's me ower lang to addle, and if I can't loss my awn, I'se nut loss naábody's else's."

So she passed through, and on to the shingle, to watch the swinging boats.

Nell dearly loved swinging, and a girlish temptation seized her to have a try. Just the sort of temptation that seizes all healthy young girls who have the chance of playing lawn tennis, hocky, or golf.

"Coom, Dicky!" she called, as she saw him standing white and wistful close by. "Coom, let's away," and she handed the necessary payment to the manager.

Dicky rejoicingly clambered into the boat and took hold of his rope.

"Why," cried Ben, who had followed her, "look, theer's t' 'Bacca Queen wi' her lile chap again! Coom on, Janie, my lass. We'se swing oor sells higher nor yon two!"

"I bet tha' hawf a sovereign thoo'l nut!" cried Dicky gaily,

as if he possessed a pocketful, and he pulled his rope and set the boat swinging.

Nell pulled her rope alternately with him, and away they went.

"Now, Jane, for thy life!" cried Ben noisily; and she obediently pulled her best.

Higher and higher the boats went, and harder and harder the occupants pulled. A little crowd gathered round, and bets were taken freely. Nell and Dicky were the favourites, but cheers and counter cheers responded.

Nell, all aglow with the exercise, strained every nerve.

"Harder, harder, Dicky!" she cried excitedly. "Look, we'se beaten 'em!"

"Naá, naá, thoo hes'unt; Ben's higher!" shouted the crowd.

The shout caused Nell to make a still mightier effort, and to urge her companion on. "Niver give in, Dicky my lad, we'se beat 'em yet."

Another strong pull from Dicky, and then a little gasping cry. "Eh, Nell! Nell!"

Game to the last, Dicky gave one final pull, then let the rope go suddenly out of his hands, and sank back, striking his head against the side of the little boat.

Nell in a moment ceased her efforts, and pulling the rope violently in the opposite direction, stopped the boat with a shock.

"Dicky, Dicky!" she cried wildly. "Here, you fellers; can't ya see as he's laámed his sell!"

Instantly eager hands were stretched forward to stop the uneasy quivering of the boat, and Nell clambered over the seat to Dicky. He was deathly pale, and lay quite still. But his face was not paler than that of the girl as she stooped over him, and raised him up into a sitting posture on the little narrow seat.

How light the child was! She could carry him home quite well. It was her fault entirely. No one else should touch him.

"Nell, thoo can't mannige him, alaán!" cried one and another.

"Ger oot!" she responded fiercely. "Let ma be!"

She stood up to her full height, in all the power of her young strength, and there was not one in the crowd who dared say a second time that she could not do it.

Tenderly she lifted him in her firm lissom arms; tenderly she settled his head against her shoulder, as if he had been a baby, and without a glance to the crowd, who followed her out of abundant curiosity, she walked steadily away.

A policeman came up to see what was the matter, and the crowd shouted all manner of explanations, but Nell, pausing for an instant, said simply, "It's a' reet. He's laámed his sell and I'se tekin' him yam. Nell Carradus thoo knas!"

The policeman looked at her and nodded. He knew all about Nell Carradus, for he had said many a cordial "Good-night" to her as she passed to and fro during her midnight nursing ventures. So he let her pass, and she bore the boy through the fair, and along the High Street, and away up The Scarth to his home.

Now and again she glanced at the face anxiously to see if there were any sign of his awakening, but there was none; but she could feel his weak breathing coming and going against the strong panting of her own heart.

As she laboured up one of the steepest bits of The Scarth she was overpoweringly relieved to see the cheerful face of Dr. Maddison appear round a corner of the lane.

As the crowd came surging up, he started instinctively forward and looked for the cause of the tumult.

"A fight," he thought to himself disgustedly. But when he saw white-faced Nell and her burden, he was instant attention.

"Nell!" he cried.

"Oh, Doctor!" she burst forth, "come with ma quick—quick, I'se kilt him!"

Her eyes were brimming with tears, which she could not wipe away because of the burden she carried.

The big burly doctor took the boy from out of the girl's exhausted arms, and Nell let him go because he was Dr. Maddison, and for that reason only, and in another moment they had reached the cottage, where they found Mrs. Dixon already on the doorstep, wringing her hands and filling the air with lamentations.

For of course many talebearers, eager for the joy of first proclaiming the mournful intelligence, had rushed on in front of the crowd, and the one to gain the honour was Kitty Benson, the same little girl who had taunted Dicky with his faithlessness on the eventful day when the 'Bacca Queen had chosen him for her squire, and without a moment's delay she had shouted out as she reached the cottage door—

"Eh, Mrs. Dixon, your Dicky's kilt!"

Mrs. Dixon had leaped forward, all the protective, tiger-like motherhood awakening in an instant, but knowing as she did that Scarth stories did not always hold water, and that Kitty Benson's especially were somewhat doubtful, she had immediately seized the girl by the shoulders and cried out—

"Wha said saá?"

"Naábody!" said Kitty, struggling, "but Nell's bringin' him up!"

And almost immediately the truth of the child's words were partly verified, and the woman saw for herself the still white face of her son in the arms of the doctor.

The crowd surged round the cottage door, but Dr. Maddison was equal to any occasion of this sort.

He set down his burden, and then told the mother to lock the door. She would have liked to have remonstrated, for no Scarthsider liked to run counter to public opinion unnecessarily, and Mrs. Dixon knew well that she would later have something to put up with from the tongues of neighbours, who would think that they had a perfect right of entry on such an auspicious occasion; but she thought again in a flash that she could lay all the blame on the doctor afterwards, and every one would perfectly comprehend that "she could not offer to go agen him!"

So the door was locked, and the crowd scattered high and low to tell the news.

As the doctor turned to do his duty he called upon Nell to help him. He impatiently thrust aside the querulous mother, who was more intent on expounding the depths of her own affection for the boy, than in helping to keep the life in him.

For a moment the doctor thought that he was for the first time in his experience going to find Nell a failure, for in her agony of self-reproach she seemed quite unnerved, but he soon cured her by saying with assumed anger—

"Hang it all, Nell, I hope to goodness that you are not preparing to play the fool?"

Nell's pride rose, and in another moment she laid aside her hat and settled herself to follow quietly and steadily the doctor's directions, and he breathed again.

Dicky was put to bed, and as the doctor made his careful examination, Nell and the parents stood looking on in intense anxiety.

It was some time before the unconsciousness left him, but at last he opened his eyes and looked wonderingly round. Then, seeing Nell bending over him, he smiled feebly. Then the eyes closed again.

The doctor came up, and again felt his pulse and listened to his breathing.

"That is natural sleep!" he remarked. "Keep watch over him, Nell, and if he wakes give him some warm milk. Don't wake him on any account. I will call in again to-night."

He went downstairs, but before leaving he decided to deliver his soul to the father and mother on a subject on which he felt strongly, and on which he held opinions diametrically opposed to those of his patients on The Scarth.

"Now remember, Mrs. Dixon. This is a critical case. I mean by that, that the boy may or may not get over this time. I can't tell yet, but he must have quiet. You or his father or Nell Carradus may go up to him, but no one else! Do you understand?"

"But there's folk as——" began the woman.

"Folks will have to mind their own business. Do you think that it looks well for you to let your boy die for the sake of pleasing your neighbours? Now, once for all, do you understand, or do you not?"

"I'll see as she behaves!" remarked the father as he sat by the fireside. Though he kept his seat for want of manners, he had a great respect for the doctor.

"Well, Sam, I know that you have some amount of sense, and I leave it with you. I'll tell you what," he continued—"now look here: I'll throw up the case! I'll never come near the place again, send for me as you may, if I hear that any one but those I have mentioned have been upstairs for the next forty-eight hours!"

At last Mrs. Dixon looked rather impressed by the awful threat, and the doctor, smiling to himself, walked away.

"What fools these women are," he thought. "Yet I should go again, even if she allowed the whole tribe up. I know I should. Possibly, after all, it is I who am the fool!"

So Nell watched patiently by Dicky, and the father and mother wandered in and out uneasily, without apparently questioning her right to be head nurse.

Early in the evening the boy awoke, and Nell persuaded him to drink a little milk according to the doctor's orders.

At first he shook his head.

"Naá, I'se tired, Nell!"

But Nell firmly raised him up with her left hand and arm.

"Naá, Dicky, be a good lad! Thoo mun do as thoo's telt!"

Dicky drank the milk, and seemed revived thereby.

"My head's bad, Nell," he whispered; "it feels as if I was swayin' right up in t' sky!"

Nell groaned inwardly. "Eh, but thoo will be better soon, lad! Theer!" and she laid him back carefully. "Now thoo moant talk, but get thy sell to sleep again!"

He shut his eyes and lay quite still for some time, and the girl sat with her hands in her lap, looking at him.

But Dicky was far from sleep, and presently he remarked wearily, without opening his eyes, "I wonder if this is t' finish!" and he put his hand up to his head.

"Naá, naá, lad," said Nell soothingly, laying her cool hand on his brow, "Thoo'l be a' reet by Monda', or happen Tuesda'."

"Tuesda's Ottarthwaite. Eh, I hope I shall get!" and a slight animation came into the voice.

Nell very much doubted it, but she suddenly remembered that she had a bottle of Eau de Cologne at home, which Catherine Glyn had presented to her at Christmas.

This particular bottle had been carefully preserved, and she had only used from it now and again when a strong yearning had passed over her for a taste of the refinements of life.

As Mrs. Dixon came upstairs opportunely, she thought that she would go and fetch it.

"I'se be back directly, Dicky!" And away she ran to her own home, which was only a few doors off.

She had forgotten all about her mother, whom she found sitting over a cup of weak tea.

"Thoo's coomed at last, Nell!" she remarked peevishly.

"Eye, but not to bide. Thoo's poor company!"

She hurried upstairs, and, securing what she wanted, went back to her patient. On the way she came upon Jane and Ben. She tried to take no notice, but Jane called out exultingly.

"Wha beat, my lass!" But so great was the wonder in Nell's heart at such callousness, that she could not even make a retort.

When the doctor called again, Dicky was decidedly better, and he congratulated Nell on her care. He pitied the girl, for she seemed to be taking this case to heart to a most unusual degree.

"You are a good lass!" he said kindly.

"Good!" returned Nell, under her breath. "Doctor, it was me as was to blame. It was me as forced him to overdo his self. Me as knew all the time, if I only thought, that he

ought'ent never to have done no such thing! And if he dies—— Eh, I could kill myself!"

"By Jove," thought the doctor, "and I believe she could!"

He put his hand on her shoulder. "My dear, nothing could have saved the boy for very long. He was stricken for death three months ago. Never blame yourself. You want your strength for making the rest of his life as happy as you can."

And then Fleming entered the house, for Nell could hear his voice down below.

"There's John Fleming downstairs. He wants me, happen! I'se best go and tell him I can't go to-night! I promised him to go out walkin'," she explained, and a faint blush struggled up over her cheeks.

"Then go!" said the doctor brightly. "A healthy breath of air will do you all the good in the world. Now off with you!" as Nell was about to make a stubborn resistance. "I may want you a good deal over this case, so no nonsense! They can manage for a couple of hours, and I wish to leave you in charge to-night, if you are willing."

The doctor went downstairs and looked critically at the young man standing in the doorway with his cap in his hand.

"John Fleming?"

"Yes, sir."

"You've come for Nell Carradus! You've done right. Take her for a fine blow on the Fell, and then give her a right down good supper somewhere or other, Green Dragon preferred, and land her back here at 10 o'clock sharp. Do you understand?"

"I'll do my very best, sir!" he replied firmly. Then he added, "That is, if she will let me!"

"Nell!" said the doctor. "You quite understand? I have given your young man directions, and my directions have always to be obeyed!"

So Nell acquiesced, for she suddenly felt within herself that she must get out of that house, and out of sight of that thin, pale face, or she would go mad. So in a short time she and

Fleming were wandering up on to the Fell on this perfect early June evening.

Neither of them spoke for some time. Nell was too busy controlling herself, and Fleming was wondering what he could possibly say to comfort his companion. Then as they gained the higher ground, and were walking over the springy down, Nell startled him by saying solemnly—

"I'se a murderess, Jack!"

The abandoned grief in the girl's voice struck him with something akin to horror. He had often longed for Nell to be serious, but this wild anguish was quite beyond his reckoning.

"Oh, no, Nell!" he remonstrated feebly.

"But I is! I is!" she cried. "Oh, sit down, do! Oh, my God!" and she sank down on the short turfy bank, and bending her head down on to her arms, sobbed bitterly. "Oh, Dicky, Dicky!" she moaned, "and it was me as did it! Oh, Dicky darlin', my lile sweetheart!"

John sat down beside her, feeling uncommonly helpless.

"Nell, dear," he began quietly, "won't you tell me all about it? I can't bear to see you crying like this!"

Then, with a wonderful amount of tact, he drew the story bit by bit from the distressed girl, and soon discovered for himself how much and how little blame really attached to her. He was incapable of flattery, and so with absolute candour he admitted that she had been in some part to blame, but only thoughtlessly; but that, as she very well knew, Dicky could not possibly live the year out.

But Nell could not take this as any comfort, and she still panted with unbearable remorse.

"But for me—me to have hurt him, poor lile feller! Oh, Jack, thoo means kindly, but I's daft—daft to-neet. I'se niver, niver forgive mysell. So it's nut likely as God will!"

"If a man die, shall he live again?" John uttered the words aloud as if he had hardly intended them.

"What did ta say?"

"Oh, nothing much. I was only wondering about some-

thing I read this morning in the Bible, words written by a terribly unhappy man thousands of years ago."

"Say it agen!"

"If a man die, shall he live again! Nell, do you know I believe that is the greatest question in the world."

On that lovely calm summer night it seemed as though there could be no such thing as death, but if death, then surely, surely life to follow!

"Dicky will!" said Nell confidently. "I'se niver think a lile lad like Dicky 'll get snuffed out like a candle!"

"No!" said John, absently picking up some last year's beech fruits, and turning the decaying shells over in his palm.

"It meks naá odds aboot me!" said Nell. "There's been no luck for me i' this world, and I'se nut keen on tryin' t'other! Look, Jack, at yon lile tree: that's grawn oot o' summut dead. Happen Dicky's be like yon!" and she laughed a short little laugh. "But think on theer's many a lot o' beech nuts as niver comes to trees. They're nobbut husks, and they rot!"

"Thou wilt not leave us in the dust.
Thou madest man, we know not why—
He thinks he was not made to die—
And Thou hast made him, Thou art just!"

Nell turned to her companion quickly. It was somewhat new to hear him quoting the Bible and repeating poetry to her. She wondered what had come to him.

"Whar did ta larn yon?"

"It's out of a book of Tennyson's poems, in one where he writes about a dear friend of his whom he had lost. I think you would like some parts of Tennyson, Nell, if you would read it."

"Dost ta kna, Jack, as thoo's a queer lad!"

"Am I? And, Nell, do you know that you are a queer girl?"

"Eye, weel enough!"

"Dear Nell," and John drew a little closer, and spoke im-

petuously, "have you never longed to be different, to be better off, better educated, better——"

"Hev I what, John Fleming?" and she turned on him fiercely. "Does ta think as I don't kna as I'se an ignorant wastrel—bred and born in sin—with niver a chance in this world, let alone any other! Does ta think I don't kna as God Himself niver meant Nell Carradus to be born? Can a clean thing coom out of an unclean? That's in thy Bible. From what part o' hell, thinks ta, did t' Divil look to find t' spirit as went intull t' babby as landed when Maria Carradus ruined hersell? Don't I kna weel enough as I'se a Divil's lass? I'se sure it's not for want o' tellin'!"

"Oh, Nell! but God——"

But the girl sprang to her feet. "Tell me, Jack Fleming! If God hed cared, couldn't He ha' managed different?"

"Nell, Nell, how dare you!"

"Dare! Oh, I dare weel enough!" and she laughed mockingly.

"Oh, Nell, but think of all the love of the Father in heaven—why, you know God Himself came down on earth to die for you and me! Think of what a Father's love means?"

The question was, perhaps, at the moment unfortunate.

"Father! Love! Jack Fleming, talk sense! Father's love? What do I kna aboot it? I'se heard auld Geordie Glyn, as should ha' mair sense—aye, and t' young 'un and all—preach o' t' father-love and mother-love till I'se been fair crazy. What do such as them kna aboot such as us? Why, theer's many a hundred in Farbiggin as hes niver kent a father's love. For why? Theer's niver been a father near 'em! And as for t' mother—— Think of my mother and love in t' saám breath!"

"Then if you cannot understand quite so easily, the heavenly Father will be the more pitiful, and His love will be the greater!"

"I tell tha, I kna nowt aboot love. Theer's naábody's iver loved me!"

To his credit, John suppressed the obvious rejoinder.

"But, Nell, it is not true that you do not know love! You yourself love at this very moment!"

"Wha?"

"Dicky!"

He was determined to say it—determined, if possible, to help this girl who had abandoned herself before him in such an unexpected manner.

"Oh, Jack, thoo's reet!" and she sat down again wearily. "Poor, poor lile Dicky!"

"Like as Nell Carradus pitieth naughty, troublesome Dicky, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him!" said John simply. "Oh, dear Nell, do try to understand how God feels to you by how you feel towards Dicky." But the girl sat silently plucking at the grass at her side. "And, Nell dear," and he took her hand firmly, "if you would only let me help you. If you would like to rise, let us both go together. Let me teach you what I know; I know very little, but I am learning, and we could learn together! Nell, dear, do!"

But Nell had gone far enough for one night, and she suddenly shrank into herself again.

"It's gettin' late now. Happen we'd best be goin'!" and she pulled her hand away.

John drew back a little disappointed. "But you'll let me do for you what the doctor said?"

She rose and looked at his anxious countenance. "Why, eye, I suppose so. I'se sure ther'll be nowt to itt at oor hoose to-neet! Eh, I is that tired!"

"You'll feel much better directly!" said John cheerfully. After all, he could not help feeling that he had made distinct progress.

So he gave her the best supper the Green Dragon afforded and brought her safely back for her night's vigil at the exact time the doctor had said.

CHAPTER XX

In consequence of strict adherence to doctor's orders Dicky revived for the time being, and by Monday he was able to get up and sit by the window, and was in fact rapidly becoming his old bright self again in a diminished degree.

Such sudden changes up and down were now to be expected; but Dicky, feeling his old life strong upon him again, began to excite himself over his desire to go to Ottarthwaite on the following day. He first broached the subject to his mother, knowing in his cute young brain that in her he would find the point of least resistance.

She having ceased beating her "poor lile lad," was now engaged in idolising him; and with an easy good-nature and a dogged combativeness on her offspring's behalf, she told him that of course he should go, "Wha was to stop him?"

And Dicky, taking her acquiescence for what it was worth, yet strengthened in some degree by it, laid siege to Nell the next time she appeared.

"I'se a' reet for to-morra! Oor lile Bella fetched me my tickut yesterda'!"

Nell looked at the slip of a boy as he sat in the big chair at the crookedly built window, with its small panes of common glass, and shook her head slowly.

"Why, Dicky lad, does ta want to gaa sa badly?"

"Eh, he does!" burst in his mother, who, now that the immediate danger was over, felt able to pour forth what had been rankling in her mind for some time.

"Eh, he does, my lass! And if it hadn't a bin for thee, Nell Carradus, he wad ha' gone reet enough! It's summat for thee to coom in, nursin' and doing', but by a' I hear it was thee as med th' job, and it's thee as should mend it!"

But Dicky interrupted the flow.

"Shoot oop, mother! I'se ha naábody say out agen Nell! She's worth a' t' lasses i' Farbiggin, and she'll git me to Ottarthwaite, I ken she will!"

Still Nell hesitated. The mother's words she felt were utterly true. She had certainly been the unthinking cause of spoiling Dicky's innocent pleasure. And yet what could she do?

Here was probably the last real delight the child had the chance of in this world. The thought was exceeding bitter to her.

"Nell, darlin', speak!" cried Dicky. "Oh Nell, I ken as I can't run! My legs feels that queer! But I'd like to see Tom run! He'll beat 'em a'; I shouldn't keer, nobbut I could wetch t' raás! And I'd like to see them girt trees yance mair, and hear t' band and wetch t' balloons!"

Nell saw perfectly clearly that the boy was absolutely unfit for the day's expedition as arranged. The children started at ten o'clock, in the long canal barges, reaching the park at midday, and they did not return until the evening. Such a prolonged effort was certainly out of the question for Dicky in his present state.

"Dicky, my lad, thoo can't! thoo can't, indeed! Thoo could niver manige it. Niver heed. I'se bide wi' tha, and I'se sing to tha, and do iverything I can to mek fun!"

But Dicky, being still weak, allowed the unworthy tears to come into his eyes, and he cried out, "Oh Nell, thoo might! thoo might!" just as though she possessed that unlimited and wonder-working power which poor mortals have stretched out after from countless ages. "Eh, thoo might!" he reiterated; "I'se be away afoor t' next year!" and the boy rose from his seat and stood trembling with the effort.

"Look's ta, Nell Carradus, what thoo's brawt him tull!" whimpered the mother. "He was hearty enough t' last week, and now he'll ha' missed his prize at t' Sunda' school—for how could he gaa yesterday when he was i' bed!—and now t' school treat! What iver could a girt lass like thee ha' bin wantin' swayin' and doin'! It caps me a' togither! But thoo aulus was a wild un!"

Nell's cheeks flushed hotly, and she turned as though she would leave the room.

"Naá, Nell, don't!" came from the boy. "Mother, behave! What! Nell did nowt! Nobbut paid for ma! It was me as hed t' badliness inside ma. I don't know wha put it theer, but Nell Carradus didn't!"

"Come, come! what's all this chattering?" and they could hear Dr. Maddison stumbling up the narrow dark stairway. "Too much talking is not good for small boys. I only said he might get up on certain conditions, you know. Well, Dicky, better? That's right; quite yourself again?"

"He's wearyin' hissell to go to Ottarthwaite to-morra', doctor," began his mother inquiringly.

"Ottarthwaite? Oh, of course, the great Scarth festival, when you all go off for the day, and tumble yourselves into the canal, and drink tea and eat unlimited buns until—My goodness, Dicky, and are you dying for buns?"

"Naá, but I'd like to see Tom run! Tom's a real good 'un, sir; he lent me twopence once—and besides, it's t' last time."

"Last rubbish!" said the doctor firmly, looking round sternly and warningly at Mrs. Dixon and Nell, as much as to say, "Who has been telling the boy that?"

But his patient saw the look.

"It wasn't them, doctor; I kna mysell weel enough as it's t' last year as I shall iver see. I heard 'em say it in t' horspital."

"They don't always talk perfect sense even in hospitals," remarked the doctor, half to himself.

"Naá, but you know it your awn self, doctor. Oh let, ma go!" he pleaded; "and if it does mek ma badly, what's the odds?"

The doctor sat down and laid his hand on the thin wasted wrist.

"Doesn't Miss Mary usually drive down to the Park on these occasions, Nell?" he asked suddenly.

Dr. Maddison had a tender heart, and the children had found the way there, and as he sat with his watch in his hand mechanically counting the beats, he was revolving in his mind

whether it was indeed possible to give a last pleasure to the dying boy—for dying he certainly was.

He might live for weeks yet, might even run about again, but the end must come; for the once chronic disease was becoming acuter each time.

"Generally," said Nell.

"Well, why not ask her to drive Dicky down for an hour or so? That would not hurt him. It would do him good; and what would not be too much for Miss Glyn would just suit this young man."

Dicky's face beamed with a sudden hope.

"You might go along and ask, Nell, anyway; there would be no harm in that."

He looked up at the girl, genuinely pleased at his own brilliant idea, and was surprised to note that Nell's brow had strangely darkened.

"Why, what's wrong? Surely you have no objection?"

"I niver was keen on beggin' from t' gentry!" said the girl stolidly; "and if all had their awn, I'd hev no call now!"

"Hullo! lies the wind in that quarter," thought the doctor to himself; then aloud he said—

"Oh come, Nell, it is not begging to ask for a seat in a carriage for an invalid. I would offer to drive the little chap down myself, but I know I can't; and besides, he would be better in a carriage than in a dog-cart. I'd go and settle it with Miss Glyn myself, but I positively haven't a moment."

Still the blackness did not lift.

"Oh, well, if you won't, you won't; but somehow I never expected your pride to come in the way of your nursing instincts! However, if it has, that's all about it, and I must hurry off to do the best I can."

"Naá, I'se go, doctor, and welcome!" said Mrs. Dixon; "I isn't prood, and if I can do summut for t' poor lile lad, the one as I'se aulus loved t' best in t' family God knas, I'se willin'. When his father comes in I'se go, though I'se nut say but what Nell wad ha' bin t' best, considerin' as how she ken's Miss Mary sa weel!"

Dr. Maddison looked up at Nell again, but still saw obstinacy seated securely on her brow.

But Dicky, looking up a moment later, saw the first rift in the cloud, and clapping his hands together, cried joyously, "She will! she will! Eh, I kent she wad!"

"What hes to be, hes to be!" she pronounced hardly, and then, breaking away from them all, she went downstairs and left the cottage.

And Dicky, pulling the doctor nearer to him, whispered: "Eh, doctor, yon's my sweetheart! Isn't she bonny?" And as the doctor nodded, he continued, "She kens as I wad have exed her to wed ma if there'd a' bin time!"

But the doctor, inwardly calling himself an old fool, which was really a habit he had got into, rose hastily, and giving his directions in his usual manner also left the cottage.

Now Nell hardly realised herself why it was so bitter to her to go to The Abbey with such a simple request. She had often asked Miss Mary a favour without much consideration, for Mary never patronised, and she had the trick of deluding people into accepting kindnesses and escaping thanks, and making herself, despite her weakness, extremely accessible.

It was, of course, really the fact that the other Eleanor Carradus was living there, and that she might actually come across her, which made Nell shrink as she was not in the habit of shrinking.

But in some dim way Nell considered that this deep humiliation was a punishment for her carelessness regarding Dicky, so as the deed had to be carried through, she set forth late in the afternoon determined that no effort on her part, and no objection on Miss Mary's, should cause failure.

Dr. Maddison had said that Dicky was to drive, and drive Dicky should. So she marched boldly up to The Abbey and knocked proudly at the back door, and asked to speak to Miss Glyn.

Being a bank holiday Mary was not expecting callers, and was therefore enjoying the music which Eleanor was making for her at the piano.

"One of the girls, Miss, to see you!" said Jacobs, coming up to the couch.

"Who is it?" asked his mistress.

"They call her Nell Carradus!" said the man, speaking low, as the music sounded strongly through the room.

"Ah!" ejaculated Mary, looking towards the piano; but Eleanor was far too intent on her business to notice this interruption. Mary considered a moment. This girl must come in, but she must dismiss her companion.

"Ask her in, Jacobs, she is sure to want something special."

"Eleanor!"—Mary had dropped the surname in response to her visitor's earnest entreaty—"Eleanor, a girl has called to see me, I wonder if you would mind leaving us for a little. She might feel diffident in telling me what she has to say before a third person. One never knows!"

"Oh, of course!" said Eleanor instantly; "I can finish this to you when she has gone!"

Eleanor rose, and as she did so, the door opened and Nell entered.

The slight, rosy, golden-haired Eleanor looked at the tall, robust, dark-haired, dark-complexioned Nell, and the look was returned with interest. And the dark eyes grew scornful, and the upper lip followed suit; but the blue eyes smiled with a natural happy smile full of kindliness, for no scornful pout would ever spoil those rosy lips on account of Nell Carradus. It was not Nell Carradus who would ever touch Eleanor's pride.

So she left the room quite innocent of having caused any disturbance in the mind of the visitor, but she thought to herself, "How awfully good-looking some of these English girls are! I'm nearly certain that it is the same girl I noticed so particularly in the street the other day in that crowd. Just a factory girl, and yet so beautiful!"

"You little doll-faced Eleanor, you will have to take a back seat altogether," laughed the girl to herself, as she ran upstairs to her own room.

"Come in, dear," said Mary pleasantly, and Nell came forward.

"Why, Nell, I am delighted to see you; we have not had a talk for a long time, have we?"

"No," replied Nell.

"Won't you sit down?"

Nell sat down on the edge of a chair in a distant part of the room.

"Oh, but you must come nearer! Now do. You know I can't come to you, so you must come to me!" and Mary laughed. She saw, however, that there was a cloud on her visitor's brow, and she began to grow a little nervous, not knowing what might be the cause of the visit.

"Oh, I can't bide!" broke in Nell, "I've only come to ask whether"—and she stopped.

"Yes?"

"Oh, only whether you would be driving to Ottarthwaite to-morrow, and whether you would be so kind as to take Dicky Dixon with you!"

"Dicky Dixon?"

"Yes, you'll know him—Jane Dixon's lile lad, what's dyin'. But happen you haven't heard?"

"No, I am afraid not. Do tell me!"

Mary was greatly relieved to hear the simple reason for the call; she had been imagining all in a moment every sort of awkward possibility.

So Nell told her all there was to tell in her quick, rugged, picturesque manner, and Mary, as she listened, understood.

She knew Nell and her circumstances intimately, and she found herself wandering off from what the girl was saying, and wondering how such a rough jewel could be lost in such a setting. The pity of it, it seemed to her.

And Nell, succumbing to the inevitable glamour of Mary's presence, let out far more than she intended regarding her Saturday horror.

"Yes, it was me as vara near kilt him!" the old cry again, and she sat looking straight before her dismally.

"But he is better now! I would not blame yourself too much," was the kind reply. "The great thing now is to con-

sider what is best to do. I shall be only too pleased to take him. There will be plenty of room, for I shall be by myself; Miss—my friend is going down by boat. Yes, I am sure I could manage beautifully. I never start until two o'clock, and we should get down there easily by tea-time, and be home soon after five. This would not tire him at all. It would be the greatest pity for him to miss the pleasure," and Mary spoke quite enthusiastically. She was so pleased to find something she could do for this girl.

But Nell was hardly listening to the arrangement, or to Mary's enthusiasms. That instant's pause after "Miss—" had arrested her attention, and again the brow darkened ominously, and as Mary looked up at the completion of her sentence she was amazed to see the change in the girl's face.

"You were going to say 'Miss Carradus,'" and she glowered.

Mary was no coward, and, moreover, proudly objected to anything approaching impertinence, so she looked quietly into the girl's face, and replied, "I was."

"And I am just Nell!"

"You are just Nell!"

"And she has £100,000!"

"Yes."

"And I have ten shillin' a week!"

"If you tell me so!"

"And we both on us had the saám gran'father!"

"Yes!"

Nell's irritation grew apace.

"And you think as God hes done right by me?"

Somehow Mary could not be angry even when the tone grew into fierce insolence.

"I do, but Man hasn't, and that is the mystery of life."

Nell sat silent. She had not expected this reply, and it seemed as though even she hardly dare say all she felt might be said.

But Mary, watching the full rich colour spreading all over the face, and noting the nervous movement of the ungloved hands, spoke again.

"Nell dear, if you and I understood everything that God has pleased to do with us, we should ourselves be as Gods! He wants to make you and me great with His own greatness, and to this end He has taken from me youth and health, and all possibility of wedded love, and from you—you poor child, very, very much, which you know better than I do, but oh! not everything—not everything!"

Nell looked at this woman lying on the couch, who was so simply putting herself on her level. She instinctively noticed, though for the first time, the thin lines which crossed and re-crossed that broad brow, telling of years of patiently borne suffering. She saw, too, the thin white fingers, and the silver-mounted crutch leaning up against a chair close at hand.

The tokens of wealth and refinement faded before that vision of ill-health and weakness, and as Nell would have clasped Dicky to her heart, or smoothed the pillow of the most faded old woman on The Scarth, or spent the night with any little baby that needed her, so she forgot herself entirely, and kneeling down, she took the outstretched hand and cried brokenly—

"Oh Miss Mary, what did God spoil two of us for?"

And in the dull silence that followed, the question rang deep into Mary's soul also. But breathlessly Nell continued—

"Why can't I give you all the strength as I have? I'd die and welcome! O God, she's good! Let her be a strong young lass again instead o' me! I's just nineteen, and I's sick on it a'!"

Nineteen! What a fatal age that seemed to be. The year when the one woman, with all life's brightness behind and in front, was broken on the wheel of suffering, and the other had already grown aweary, waiting for the brightness that never came.

But Mary was the stronger woman of the two, and having a heart at leisure, she hastily put up a prayer for guidance that she might say the thing that would help.

"Thank you, thank you, Nell dear! I am sure you would do anything you could, but you and I must not try and spoil

God's work in us. He wants you, Nell. He needs your youth, your strength, and, Nell dear, your beauty! You are His, and it remains for you not to disgrace Him. Oh, Nell, I have feared for you sometimes!"

"Eh, you may well fear; I was born of the devil!"

"And by that you mean that you have no chance for a good life on earth?" asked Mary, probing the wound to the quick.

"I think as I'se a devil's barn!" said Nell shortly, "and I'se reet!"

"All sin is of the devil," said Mary thoughtfully; "but Christ came as the Lamb of God to bear away the sin of the world. Don't, dear Nell, worry your mind about all sorts of odd thoughts. God loves you! Christ died for you, to save you, and deliver you from sin. He only wants from you your life—your life as it is, in all its poverty and——"

"Disgrace!" put in Nell.

"Well, disgrace if you like. But you know you have never been disgraced by your mother, as He was disgraced when He took the sin of the world upon Him!" and Mary's face shone at the marvel of the thought. "No, no, dear, there is no excuse there!—Now, she added brightly, "can I help you—you yourself?"

"Naá, there's nothin'."

"I wonder if you would like to go away. Go somewhere and learn a profession? You are clever, Nell, and I am sure there would be no difficulty about the expense if you really thought you would like it. Let me speak to Mr. Glyn——"

"Do you mean as that other Eleanor Carradus would happen pay for ma?"

This was the thought that was passing through Mary's head. She imagined that Eleanor would probably be glad to do it.

"Because," said the girl proudly, "I think as there is some of John Carradus' money as I have a right to—oh, not according to lawyers—but he had no right to do as he did; but if I can't have my gran'father's brass from himsell, I'se tek it

from naábody! My uncle hes offered, but I'se telt him t' same."

Mary quickly dropped the subject. "Then about Dicky. I shall be delighted; I am so very pleased that you came and asked me. I shall have room for you, too, if you like."

"Naá!" said the girl quickly, "I'se go with t' others! I'se getten my tickut!" Nell was dropping fast into the vernacular again.

"Very well, then, I will call for him at two o'clock, so tell him that he shall ride like a prince, and see all the fun! Thank you for letting me have the chance of giving a cup of cold water!"

Nell could not get any thanks out herself. She could give freely and happily, but thanking was not in her nature, and she found it hard work; but, happily, Mary did not seem in the least to expect it.

"Look, Nell, lift the bunch of roses out ot that vase—I have so many—and take them to Dicky with my love!"

"They are beauties!" said Nell, more graciously, as she carefully lifted them out so as not to spill any water on the beautiful embroidered table-cover.

"Yes; they are all grown at Fells. We are not very successful with our roses; I must really have a good talk with young Fleming, who works there. He seems to have a perfect genius for rose-growing!"

"Has he?" said Nell dully; then wishing good afternoon, she took her departure.

CHAPTER XXI

THE Vicarage was in a state of wild unrest on Whit Tuesday morning. From an early hour the day's peace had been disturbed for ever by the excited junior members of the household. For was not every one going to Ottarthwaite! And of course every one had to get dressed in the right

clothes, and the hampers had to be packed, and the Canal Head reached in time.

"We have to be there by 10.30," said Maud, as she struggled with a half-tableful of sandwiches. These were such a worry, for the bread was too new, and they kept tumbling to pieces in spite of her best efforts.

"No!" contradicted Polly; "the boat starts at 10.30, but Uncle Ryder said we were to be there considerably earlier or he would not let us in!"

"Oh yes, yes!" cried Sybil, all in a fume, "and where are my hat? My new common one—not my Sunday one, of course. Nurse are so tiresome; she will keep attending Kat, and she keeps saying 'In a minute, in a minute,' and her minutes are hours; and I are so worried, and I can't get anybody to find my hat!"

"Polly, do go!" said Maud urgently; but Polly was too busy tying up some rugs and cloaks.

"You know, Maud, I can't; mother told me to do these things up. It is, of course, perfectly ridiculous to take so many wraps. Just look what an exquisite day! How could any one catch cold!"

So Sybil was left mourning until her father appeared, and at his appearance her lamentations promptly took a lower tone.

"Sybil!"

"Well, father," she cried, prancing round half-apologetically, "nobody will find my hat, and I can't go without, and mother won't let me wear my Sunday hat; my old one are so horrid!"

"Well, dear, don't squeak! Polly, go and help her. I will finish those!" and Polly went without a word.

"I say!" cried Rob, bursting into the room, "hurry up! The boys have come to carry down the hampers! You know we have to call for Miss Carradus, and it's disgusting to be late!"

"Oh, they'll be sure to keep places for us!" said Maud serenely, as she finished tying up her last package.

"Yes, but we don't wan't to miss the parade!"

And then Mrs. Glyn came in, very cheerful and rather happy-go-lucky, as if she had left everything to the last moment and was busy hoping for the best.

"That's right, Maud; you are a good child. Now I think we are ready. Cook and I have finished packing the utensils, &c."

"Knives, mother?" asked Maud.

"Oh no!" exclaimed Mrs. Glyn. "How stupid; run into the kitchen and tell cook; they are just tying down the hamper. Oh and I meant to have brought some oranges for the children. Oh, well, it can't be helped now!"

"Have we all to go to The Abbey, mother?" asked Rob.

"Oh no! One or two will be quite plenty."

"May I?" cried Rob.

"And me?" said Sybil, who appeared at the moment radiant in a large flappy chip hat—contented at last.

"We can't all go!" said Polly; "that would be absurd!"

"Suppose Rob and Polly go, then!" said Mrs. Glyn.

"Yes, dear!" broke in the Vicar. "I think, mother, that we and the rest had better go directly to the Canal Head. I promised father to be there early to help him to keep order."

Although the Vicar was not officially connected with the Scarth Sunday school, it was always recognised that on festive occasions he should give his father support, and on this day of all others in the year he felt called upon to sacrifice himself, for a man of his temperament such a day as the annual outing to Ottarthwaite Park was one long sacrifice.

For the Ottarthwaite treat was truly a serious undertaking for those who had the responsibility. Some thousand men, women, children, and babies made their annual outing in a manner peculiar to The Scarth. But The Scarth was nothing if not adventurous, and whilst other schools resorted to trains, carriages, and coaches, Scarthsiders chose a far more delightful mode of transit.

For at Whitsuntide the canal barges congregated at Farbiggin and underwent some amount of cleaning. Their dark depths were relieved from their loads of black coal, and were

then covered over with clean boarded decking, and their dusty sides were enfolded in new wrappings.

Then cartloads of school forms were brought down and arranged on the improvised deck, thus securing sitting accommodation for the oldest and the youngest; but the great ambition of the older boys and girls was to find a place on the side of the barge from whence they could surreptitiously stoop down, and let a stick or an umbrella rush through the cool water, or grasp a bunch of tender spring leaves from an overhanging bough.

The natural object of the teachers, who were decorated with white rosettes provided for the occasion by Mary Glyn, was to intercept these efforts, and to control the spirit of adventure which was abundantly evident; and such was their influence that even amongst the wild-spirited Scarthsiders it was the rarest occurrence for any serious accident to happen.

Certainly hats, hymn-books, umbrellas dropped overboard from time to time, causing momentary excitement, and at the bridges, when the boat came in contact with the bank for a few moments, there were attempts by those inside the boat to drag in a ticketless friend for a free ride. But Mr. Glyn and his teachers were disciplinarians and sternly interfered with such irregularities.

This canal passed through some of the most charming country in Moorshire, and the boats, drawn by their gaily decorated horses and carrying their bright burdens of enthusiastic happiness, passed like a dream through the sweet country side which seemed to have dressed up in all its early summer daintiness for the occasion.

The bluebells, and the cowslips, and the primroses looked up and smiled as the sound of the children's laughter reached them in their woodland solitude.

The cows came hurrying down in their lumbering fashion to the water's edge, allured by the sweet singing, and the horses, enjoying their holidays in the fragrant meadows, galloped merrily as the children cheered them lustily; and in the evening, when the sun was glowing all the sky, the gay

little rabbits, advancing their long ears warily, gave impertinent glances at the festive intruders, and then darted away with their white tails cocked up behind them, and the boys and girls screamed with pure ecstasy.

So the boats glided on tranquilly for several miles; and year after year, the hawthorns and the young oaks, and the hazels, and all the rest of the woodland aristocracy, stretched themselves upwards to the bright blue sky to deck the occasion, and the roses laughed to the spring flowers nestling at their feet and whispered, "Summer has come, the children are here!" and down the little lane which led from the canal to the Park, many a tender blossom, smiling a last pathetic smile, yielded itself willingly unto death, in the hot eager hands of a little child.

So the old people from The Scarth, and the middle-aged ones grown hard and old before their time, grew young again as they smelled the woodland scents, and their eyes grew glad and beautiful as the wonderful world poured itself into their faces, and their toiling bodies were rested by the gliding of the boat through the still water and their hearts were rested by the loving intercourse with those around them.

Here was no dusty roadway, no rattling train, no public-house. Just pure, restful enjoyment.

So no wonder that Ottarthwaite was to the young ones an adventure, and to the older ones a familiar dream.

Eleanor was quite ready for the day's expedition when the girls appeared. The Abbey was Liberty Hall to the Vicarage children, so on arrival Polly and Rob wandered about until they discovered Eleanor descending the stairs, drawing on her gloves as she came.

"Oh!" cried Rob, with something of a sigh of relief, "you are ready, Miss Carradus; that is a comfort! We thought perhaps——"

"How do you do?" said Polly, holding out her hand politely—for Polly was nothing if not proper.

"Quite well, thank you!" said Eleanor cheerfully. She had already made the acquaintance of the Vicarage family,

and was rather entertained at the calm way in which they had all accepted her as belonging to them.

"How is Aunty Mary?" asked Polly again.

"Miss Glyn is very well, only rather tired, so she is saving herself for this afternoon!"

"Well, do let us go!" said Rob, who was all on the fidget. "Never mind your gloves—you can't wear gloves when you get there. I have mine, but I shall stuff them into my pocket the very minute I get on to the boat!"

"I am quite ready!" returned Eleanor eagerly. She was very pleased to get off with these two children, and she was under the impression that she might be able to let out some of the babyhood that was still crying out for expanding room. "What a lovely day it is!"

"Yes, of course!" returned Rob. "You know grandpapa always prays for a fine day. That's why!"

"Oh!" was all Eleanor could think of saying.

"You see grandpapa's so awfully good, don't you know, that he gets lots of things he asks for, that we couldn't," continued Rob, as they went down the garden to the river walk. "It's jolly for us that we have him, because we arn't good at all, so of course we couldn't expect much, could we?"

"We have father!" put in Polly rather reprovingly.

"Oh well, father! I know he's as good as good, but he can't be quite as good as grandpapa—he is not so old, it can't be expected!"

Eleanor found herself quite at a loss as to what she was supposed to say, but there was no need to trouble herself, for Rob was equal to any amount of chattering.

"And you are going to enjoy yourself frightfully! We always do. Now do you like singing?"

"Very much! but I can't sing much myself."

"Then you can listen to us. We sing on and on, hymns you know. We never stop the whole time. We have lovely hymns. 'We are out on the ocean sailing!' is the very nicest. It makes you really feel as if you were going to America or Heaven or somewhere jolly, though it is only a canal!"

"And 'Star of Faith'!" said Polly.

"Oh yes, 'Star of Faith,' that says, 'Bless the sailor's lonely pillow, far, far at sea!' We love that! Polly and I sing it at night in bed, and it makes you feel lovely and comfortable."

"We are going straight to the boats," explained Polly. "The school starts at The Scarth, and they make a procession through the streets with flags; but we won't worry about seeing that—it isn't much!"

As they neared the Canal Head they noticed group after group of people making their way in the same direction. Some were carrying the day's provisions for themselves and their families; but others were merely assembling to see the happy start. Cloudless sky and a light sunshiny breeze—quite perfect—and Rob and even the proper Polly pranced along one on each side of Eleanor, in huge spirits.

Ryder and his father, with many stalwart teachers or helpers from the adult men's classes, were already on the scene of action arranging the boats, placing new comers and selling tickets to late comers at an increased charge.

For there were always a number of unbelievers who cautiously waited to make sure of the weather before parting with their money, and for this failure in the spirit of speculation or mysticism they had to pay extra.

Ryder was immediately aware of the arrival of Eleanor and her companions, for in the midst of all his labours he had been looking out for the sunshiny head anxiously.

He was cleared for action in a light Norfolk suit, with a white straw hat, with ribbon and tie of his college colours. He looked the picture of wholesome energetic English young manhood, as he turned rapidly from one to another, arranging, directing, gesticulating, and answering incessantly to the cries for "Mr. Ryder" which came alike from perplexed helper and overbearing, expostulating scholars.

"Ah, here you are!" he cried, as he made his way as fast as he could over the forms in one of the boats. "We are in the last boat—the fourth. Polly, I want you to settle yourself towards the back—I mean the stern!" and he laughed. "My

sister-in-law will be here directly," he said to Eleanor. "Will you excuse my rushing away?"

"Oh, do not mind us at all!" said Eleanor. "We shall be all right!" And in another moment he had dashed off.

"Hullo, Tom!" to Dicky's small friend. "Ah! all you lads want to be in the first boat, I suppose! Well, there are plenty to keep order, so mind you behave yourself, or there will be no ride home, remember that!"

The boys laughed; the fun was beginning and they were trooping away, when Ryder called, "Change your minds and come into my boat!" He was anxious to entice a few of the more lively members into his boat with a view to discipline.

"Naâ!" mocked Tom. "Your'se is t' lasses' boat, Mr. Ryder!" and away they sped towards the front.

There certainly did seem to be a quieter spirit amongst those who chose the last boat, and Rob was rather afraid that they might be too flat there, for she dearly loved anything in the shape of a bustle.

But in a few moments the band was heard in the distance, and the great procession arrived.

Then indeed there was a scramble. Tickets were examined, children were lost and found again. Old people were helped across the narrow planks amidst the gay laughter of their compeers, and the boys and girls struggled for the best seats. Children having been well fortified before leaving home with oranges, nuts, and "toffies," promptly sat down in the busiest gangways to enjoy the same, and every one stood up eagerly looking for every one else.

But it was all merry and amusing, and gradually a general settlement took place.

Each boat held about two hundred and fifty persons, and was commanded by some leading teacher, assisted by some capable men and women lieutenants; so by the laws of preference it came to pass that the people sorted themselves pretty much as they desired, and each boat was comfortably filled.

Nell had meant to go in the first boat with some particular friends whom she had arranged to meet, but having been

hindered, through seeing her little brothers and sisters off in decent style, and then running in to have a last word with Dicky, she turned up very late.

John Fleming was too busy in an official capacity under Ryder to notice her, but she determined to avoid the boat that held the rival Eleanor, yet as she came hurrying up at the last moment she had to get in where she could.

"There's that girl again!" remarked Eleanor to Catherine, who looked up in the direction Eleanor's eyes had taken.

"Why, where have you seen her before?"

"She came in yesterday afternoon to see Miss Glyn!"

"She is in my class!" said Catherine vaguely. "Now, Sybil, don't worry! Sit where mother tells you!"

"But, mother," whined Sybil uneasily, "I want to be at the side—I want to look at the lovely water!"

"No, dear!" said her mother decidedly, and Sybil pouted and submitted.

"Oh, the horses!" cried Rob; and round the towing-path the be-ribboned, be-braided, be-plaited animals were led, with their brass-plated harness shining like gold.

Cheer upon cheer rang out from the children, for now they felt that they were really going.

"Oh!" cried Rob disappointedly. "There, that is always the way, they never do fairly by the last boat. Look at our horses! They are not half as grand as the others, and one is a donkey! I call that a shame!"

"Why, niver heed, lass!" said a woman sitting next her. "What we'se git theer safe enough."

At last all were on board, and the voyagers started. The crowd on the banks cheered lustily, and those on board began waving handkerchiefs, and singing their favourite hymns quite regardless of any special leadership.

"Now let us all settle down comfortably!" said Catherine, as she made the most of the room there was.

Mr. Glyn was busy arranging for methodical hymn-singing, and his son Henry was energetically supplementing him, whilst Ryder, from far away at the extreme bow of the "vessel,"

surrounded by a large following of young men, watched for the word of command, and could be seen leading his end of the boat lustily.

"Isn't it lovely!" said Rob, sitting very close up against Eleanor. "And doesn't Uncle Ryder look jolly?"

"Very!" acquiesced Eleanor.

"You know Uncle Ryder has not exactly a beautiful voice! It is what they call stentorian, but it is splendid for an occasion of this description," put in Polly.

"Yes," acquiesced Rob. "You can't tire Uncle Ryder! You watch him! He'll sing all the way there and back, and set off balloons and turn skipping ropes, and pour out sugary tea, and play 'Grandy Needles,' and everything, you know!"

"And talk!" added Polly. "Oh, you should hear Uncle Ryder talk to the old women. They dote on him!"

To Eleanor all the excitement around her was most strange and interesting. It seemed so curious to her to take part in such a mix up of society, and the general happiness was very infectious.

If she were interested in those around her, there were very many who were as eagerly interested in watching her from far and near.

"Yon's her!" said Bella Lancaster, who was seated a short distance away.

"Whar?" asked Jane Ann Martin, who had settled herself so that she could keep an eye on Ben, who was being a little too decided in his attentions to Nell to please her.

"Her as is sitting next Mrs. Glyn. She's bonny, any road!"

"Aye! any lass can be bonny as hes rooked all her friends and relations out o' £100,000!" said Bella severely.

She was extremely sore that at John Carradus's death she had received nothing more than a liberal remuneration for work done on his behalf.

And on the other side of the boat, William Carradus and Janet were seated, with little Jacky standing between them.

"Yon's Richard' lass!" whispered Janet.

"Well, don't thee go talkin' tull her!"

"And for why? Surely she can say a civil word to her own aunt?"

But William whispered to his wife, "Thoo kens as our Dick wedt a lady, and Mr. Glyn telt us, as t' auld father, he didn't want her to be a Scarthsider! He wanted her to bide a lady!"

"Well, would speaking to thee and me hurt her?"

"Naá, but think on as there's Maria! She'd best keep off t' Scarth!"

"Aye, happen she hed, Uncle William!" said Nell suddenly at his side.

William started. "Why, Nell! I didn't see tha!"

"I'se big enough, Uncle William!" laughed the girl. "I'se coom to sit by thee and Aunt Janet. I'se sick o' yon company t'other side of t' boat," and she glanced scornfully at Ben and several other lads of like calibre.

She was in good spirits this morning, and intent on getting plenty of fun out of the day. Dicky was much better, and she had left him eagerly anticipating his afternoon's pleasure. She had already had the joy of snubbing Ben for his attentions, and, being peculiarly sensitive to her surroundings, the general gaiety was infecting her, and even the fact that "yon other Eleanor" was seated in the same boat seemed incapable of depressing her.

"Well, lass, thoo's lookin' weel!" said Janet admiringly. "That white frock suits tha! What med ta think o' yaller ribbins!"

"Happen t' primroses!" said Nell lightly.

Nell's attire was inexpensive, but well thought out. It was nothing more than a washing white cotton, with a yellow waistband, and a primrose-coloured scarf swathed round her shapely neck, forming a bow at her throat, whilst a white straw hat with a simple yellow band completed the outfit.

Yet, after all, it was Nell herself with her shining eyes, her handsome features, her burnished brown hair, her supple,

well-proportioned figure, which turned such an outfit into one fit for a queen.

More than one Scarthsider looked with approving satisfaction on their 'Bacca Queen, as she sat making nonsense with those around her.

Fleming, who was at the extreme front of the boat helping Ryder, looked down on the merry throng, and had eyes only for the nodding head and the laughing mouth, and he wondered eagerly what Nell was talking about. He had noted with satisfaction the little episode, when Nell deserted Ben, and he was planning a pleasant hour with her during some part of that bright summer day.

CHAPTER XXII

THE shady Park was thronged with the joyous crowd. Football, cricket, rounders and other games were progressing actively. Family parties were seated under the wide-spreading trees; boys and girls were swinging, skipping, racing and romping in the first energy of the day.

The Abbey party had possessed themselves of a large tree a little apart from the merrymakers, and Maud and Polly and Rob had waxed busy and important over arranging the wraps on the ground and unpacking the provisions.

And this done, they had rushed off to help with the games in response to the eager demands of the school children; and Eleanor rushed off with them and turned the skipping-rope until her arms ached again, and swung the children and danced round in the ring games, and finally escaped, exhausted, back to the tree, that she might rest and yet watch from her vantage point all that went on around her; and Polly soon arrived to bear her company, and began promptly to entertain her in her usual discursive fashion.

"You see the carriage will be coming with Aunt Mary directly, then it will be tea-time, so I want to make everything

quite ready, and then, when we have given the children their tea, we can have our own."

Polly spoke of the scholars as if they were all years younger than herself.

"I see," returned Eleanor smiling; "well, I can't think how you all run about so mnch. Look at those teachers over there!"

"Oh, well, the teachers have to do it!" said Polly! "it is their business, and the children would not think it any fun if they were not playing with them!"

From their position they could see a good part of the park, and Eleanor, who had thrown herself down on a rug under the tree and was fanning her face with a bunch of fern fronds, was busily taking in the scene.

She noted, a short distance off, Sybil and Rob swinging under Maud's kindly superintendence.

Children were stooping to drink, and wash their hot little hands in the astonished streamlet that had for long generations rippled along merrily to itself in the peace and solitude of the grand old park.

Big boys and girls were roughly romping together. Ryder, with his coat off, was bending all his energies in a game of cricket. Mr. Glyn was talking deferentially with group after group of parents or grown-up scholars.

The Vicar and his wife might be seen strolling away in the far distance, enjoying themselves in their own way; and by a group of farm cottages, a circle of energetic teachers and adult scholars were preparing for tea, and over the summit of some rising ground, Eleanor could descry the heads of some deer which had fled before the children's noise.

It was all very charming and new to Eleanor, and she was quite happy storing up her impressions to send to Kätchen. And as she looked up again she noticed, walking along the grassy path under the avenue of beech-trees that stretched from one end of the park to the other, a young man of the country gentleman stamp, whom she could hardly imagine as belonging to the school staff. He was tall and very fair,

and carried with him a certain air of distinction; he held himself well and walked along with a step of easy assurance, but slowly, as though he were looking for some person or persons.

Eleanor's quick eyes noticed him instantly, and she followed his movements with interest. And as she watched, she saw him raise his hat and shake hands with Mr. Glyn, with whom he stood talking for a moment or two.

Then he passed on and stood looking at the cricket match, that was in full swing between the junior scholars and their teachers, and Ryder's class of young men.

As he stood there watching the play, with one hand in his pocket and the other holding a cigarette, there was a loud shout of dismay from a group of men and boys who were lying, in every form of dishabille, on the grass. The ball was tossed exultantly from one player to another and Ryder turned from the wicket—caught out.

A little smile crept over the watcher's countenance as he turned away and strolled forward.

'Who is that coming along?" asked Eleanor.

Polly looked up. "Oh, that is Mr. Arthur Calthwaite. He lives at Calthwaite, between here and Farbiggin. He's rather a swell, you know, or thinks himself one, which comes to the same thing!"

Polly's pronouncements amused Eleanor extremely, and she laughed.

"Dear me, and do you know him intimately?"

"Oh no! But we see him at church when he has nothing else to do, and he doesn't like sitting amongst the 'working classes'—he likes his own pew that the family has had for generations; he says he dislikes peppermint!"

"Peppermint?"

"Yes, I heard him tell father once, that the working classes were addicted to peppermint, and that the smell of it disturbed his worship!"

"What nonsense!" laughed Eleanor, then she continued her examination of the figure that was coming nearer.

Large blue eyes, light wavy hair, and an open countenance.

"Arthur!" thought she, and her mind slipped back to the Idylls. "Arthur the spotless Prince," and then suddenly she thought of Kätchen and her nonsense. Perhaps this was the Prince! That would be a delightful adventure!

At the idea, she drew herself together instinctively, and her hand wandered up to her hat to feel if it were on straight, and she remembered that her cheeks were flaming with sun and exercise.

Arthur Calthwaite was certainly hunting for something or someone. He had had a great downfall the week before in connection with Lady Margaret Temple, who had departed to town giving him to understand that his suit was quite hopeless.

But Calthwaite was not a man to despair. If he could not get one he must set to work to get another, and, as the news of the arrival of the wonderful heiress had reached him opportunely, he thought he might as well come down and have a look at her.

So here he was, all ready to be favourably impressed, and as he came forward he saw Eleanor and recognised Polly.

And his eyes were delighted with the vision of the flushed, golden-haired girl, in the snowy muslin frock, with the chip hat adorned with white ribbons and violets. She made a pretty picture with the great green moss-covered trunk of the old beech-tree for a background, and the bunch of fading fern fronds in her lap, whilst the leafy shadows and early afternoon sunlight played around her.

Whoever this girl was, she was certainly not one of the Farbiggin tribe. Calthwaite was intimately conversant with the points of all the girls in his neighbourhood. Hoping for the best he threw away his cigarette, and strolling forward, greeted Polly with a charming smile.

"Well, Miss Polly, you are busy! What a jolly day it is for you all."

He was close up to the tree now, and Polly was down on her knees spreading potted meat on to bread and butter.

She got up slowly and held out her hand, after carefully wiping it first in a towel.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Calthwaite—yes, it is a lovely day. Have you come for duty, or pleasure?"

"Really, Miss Polly, I don't know!" he laughed happily. "Suppose I try to help you!"

"I am afraid that you would not be the slightest use, thank you!" said Polly, in her very politest tone.

Again he laughed. "Nothing like honesty in this world, apparently!"

Eleanor prepared to rise, but seeing her movement he said gently—

"Oh, please do not let me disturb you on any account, Miss——"

He stopped and looked down full in her face.

"Miss Carradus!" said Polly; "she is a friend of ours. Mr. Arthur Calthwaite, Miss Eleanor Carradus!" and she introduced them in style.

Neither could help laughing at the quaintness of the child's manner.

"No, really you would be no earthly use!" said Polly again, as he made an effort to assist her. "You had far better sit down and make yourself comfortable, and be an ornament like Miss Carradus."

"That of course is an impossibility, Miss Polly, but perhaps Miss Carradus will allow me to play the Beast to her Beauty!" he returned, feeling that the fates were indeed propitious, as he settled himself comfortably by Eleanor's side.

He talked to her deferentially, yet with well-bred ease, and Eleanor could not help contrasting his conversation with poor Ryder's efforts in that direction.

"This is quite a summer Idyll!" he said, at last, enthusiastically. "Are you fond of poetry, Miss Carradus, may I ask?"

"Very. Are you?"

"Oh, extremely." He might have added that his poetical education was limited to the knowledge of a few popular songs

and some stock poems he had been made to learn when a child.

"But I like practical poetry the best of all!" he added, bowing slightly to his companion.

Eleanor laughed. It was amusing to have compliments again. She had not had a real one since she left Germany, unless she might count all little Miss Williams's prattlings.

"You see," she remarked, "I have just come from the land of poetry, and England seems cold and strange at first!"

"I expect it does!" Calthwaite returned, delighted to find a common ground so soon. "There is nothing to be compared with dem alten Vaterland, and with a boyish blush he began to talk in German.

"Ach!" cried Eleanor, surprised, in her turn, into her pet language, "do you speak German also?"

"A very little!" he returned modestly, "but if it is a pleasure to hear it, I do not mind blundering to you!"

This was truly delightful, but Polly very shortly remarked, with severe gravity, "Well, if you will talk in that hateful language it is no fun at all. I don't call it fair?"

The culprits laughed, but Polly departed in great displeasure.

So again the fates seemed working for the express purpose of pleasing Arthur Calthwaite.

As to Eleanor she was prepared to look upon everything on this wonderful day in the full spirit of adventure, and it seemed quite impossible to keep up any kind of conventionality with a young man who would insist on talking German with his cases and genders all in confusion, and yet who somehow managed to convey the most suggestive insinuations regarding the blissful circumstances in which he now found himself.

"You see, I was at Heidelberg when a boy, Miss Carradus, and I got as much fun, and as little German, out of the language as possible. No wonder you laugh!"

"But you don't mind really?" asked Eleanor; "I can't help laughing when I am amused. I have no self-control—at least so they used to tell me in Germany. But here in England I consider myself a model. I really do!"

"Does not this all seem very odd to you?" he asked, making a motion towards the Park.

"Oh, very! I have never seen anything quite like it. But of course there is a great deal of *al fresco* enjoyment in Germany, more than in England, I understand. But this Park is lovely. It reminds me very much of Weimar. I feel quite homesick. I am such a stranger, you know!"

"You are like a bright visitant from another sphere, come to lighten our darkness!"

"I am afraid there is not much light about me!" and she laughed. "I am the black sheep here, I think. Every one seems so very good in Farbiggin. So religious, I mean!"

"Oh," he responded, feeling his way carefully. "Exceeding piety is perhaps a trifle heavy, nicht? Your guardian seems to take life very seriously! As for his son," and he glanced in the direction of Ryder, who could be seen chatting to his young men, "he seems almost as serious as his father; but to-day he will have to let go some of his starch."

He looked at the girl admiringly. It struck him that if he really meant to go in for her, he would have to make the most of his opportunities, as the lawyer's son, living under the same roof with her, might become a serious rival.

"I don't understand that game at all!" said Eleanor, looking in Ryder's direction, and ignoring her companion's suggestion.

"Doubling!" thought her companion. "Never mind, the harder the chase, the more exciting the sport." So he tried again.

"Oh, I agree with you that Farbiggin people are rather slow. Your guardian, I expect, lays a stern hand on the pleasures of life. Now, you can't deny that!" and he laughed brightly and ingenuously.

"Well, I can't say as to that just yet!" she returned cautiously. "You want me to commit myself to an opinion. How do you know that I do not hold a stern unworldly creed myself!"

"I have eyes!" he returned calmly, and Eleanor's blue eyes, lifted to his face shining with merriment, suddenly took to examining the grasses at her feet.

And now there was a little commotion, for a carriage appeared coming through the gate at the Farbiggin end of the Park.

"Miss Glyn!" exclaimed Eleanor, with great pleasure in her voice. Calthwaite leaped to his feet and assisted her to rise.

"Thanks!" she said, shaking the tumbles out of her frock. "I must go and meet that carriage; Miss Glyn is quite the most charming woman in Moorshire!" and she rushed off, leaving her companion to follow if he cared to do so.

The carriage stopped within a few yards of the encampment, and Mary's happy face was only eclipsed by the beaming countenance of Dicky, who was seated in state beside her.

"Isn't it lovely, Miss Glyn?" cried Eleanor; "and doesn't everybody look jolly?"

"Delightful. I hope you are getting on nicely, dear? Well, Dicky, here we are! Why, there is the bell. We are just in time for tea. How clever we are—you and I, Dicky!"

"It's them horses what did it!" said Dicky, giving the credit where he thought it was due. He was glancing round from side to side in search of companions, and his real object was to find Nell.

But Mary was watching Calthwaite coming up behind Eleanor, and her manner lost its perfect freedom, but she nevertheless held out her hand, as he raised his hat.

"Mr. Calthwaite! How do you do? Beautiful weather, is it not?"

"Most delightful!" he responded, and added boldly, "Being in a holiday mood, I came along to see the merry-making!"

"I am sure that we need all the help we can get in order to give the people a good time!" said Mary suggestively.

A swift glance of amusement passed over Eleanor's countenance, causing the young man to remark, with engaging candour—

"I am afraid, Miss Glyn, that I cannot claim to any kind of unselfishness in the matter of assisting the public. I am awfully sorry, but I have done nothing more than try to enter-

tain Miss Carradus, to whom one of your nieces introduced me, and for such a pleasure——"

But his speech was interrupted by Dicky, who called out to a small boy who came sidling up to the carriage—

"Tom, Tom, is t' raáces ower, and hes ta sin Nell?"

Tom, delighted at being the mate of such an important personage as Dicky, came still closer, and explained that the races were coming on directly after tea, and that he would go and find Nell.

Nell was not far to seek, for she had seen the carriage the moment it entered the Park, and was already walking towards it rather slowly with her companion Sarah, a little uncertain as to whether she would go on or not.

But Tom was not bashful. "Dicky wants tha, Nell. Coom on!"

And Mary, seeing Nell in the distance, waved her hand enticingly, and Dicky waved his cap and shouted as best he could in his weak little voice—

"Nell, I'se here!"

But the girl, seeing Eleanor standing by the carriage, and knowing that Mary must know what she was thinking, still hesitated, until Sarah remarked, "Why, Nell, what's wrang wi' tha? Gaa on! Besides, I want to see what yon lass looks like!"

And Nell, shamed that even Sarah should imagine that she was afraid, advanced.

And as she did so, there were many Scarthsiders looking on who watched the girl as she strode forward, and they watched as she stood close up against the heiress, and the remark that Bella Lancaster made to Janet was probably the opinion of many, "For a' yon t'other lass hes t' brass, oor 'Bacca Queen is t' Queen still."

But Eleanor, who had no thought of competition in her mind in connection with the handsome girl, looked with admiring eyes on her as she came forward.

"You see, Nell, it is all right; I have brought him safely and not too tired, I trust. Don't let him run about!"

"Naá, I'se mind him, Miss Mary! Would ta like to hev thy tea wi' me or wi' t' gentry, Dicky?"

Nell spoke brightly, as if she had never hoarded up any grievance against that particular class.

"Dicky will stick to his best friends, I should think!" said Mary.

"Of course I mun gaa wi' Nell!" he responded.

So the door was opened, and Nell herself helped him from the carriage and led him away.

"Good gracious!" thought Calthwaite, "where on earth have I seen that face before? Talk about statuesqueness! The pose is magnificent! I am a lucky dog to-day! I will enjoy the blue eyes as long as I can, but if I don't get a look in at the dark ones before I depart, I was not worth raising. I suppose she's a Farbiggin lass, but, by all the gods, a princess in disguise. I wonder if I'm game to act King what's-his-name and the beggar-maid. Probably not—but a man has a right to his sport!"

CHAPTER XXIII

BUT a cloud of annoyance had gathered over Mary's face when Catherine came up and seated herself in the carriage for a few minutes' chat.

"We all seem getting on very nicely," Catherine remarked. "It is a blessing they are nearly ready for tea. Why, Mary, what is the matter? Worried about something?"

"Oh, perhaps it's nothing!" said Mary. "Only Arthur Calthwaite has turned up. He and Eleanor seem to have been having a happy time! Did you notice them?"

Mary spoke a shade reproachfully, as if she thought that her sister-in-law might have bestowed a little more attention on the young visitor.

Now Catherine might have said that she had never given another thought to Eleanor from the moment she entered the Park, but she felt Mary's tone, and replied quickly, as if suffering under an accusation.

"Well, Mary, I never noticed anything particular. In fact Harry and I have been out of sight most of the afternoon down by the river. I never imagined that any particular chaperonage was required to-day. Why, she must be a regular little flirt!"

"Oh no, dear! I did not mean any blame, and I don't suppose the child would really take his compliments seriously, only you know what Arthur Calthwaite is—I never can quite trust him, in spite of his open countenance. I am afraid this young person will be something of a responsibility!" and Mary sighed.

But Catherine laughed. "Nonsense, Mary, young people will be young people. The girl must take her chance, and you want your tea!"

In another moment Ryder came rushing up, very hot and very red, and very disarranged. "Hullo, Mary! That's right! All is going on beautifully. Isn't the weather perfect? We are just going to get through the tea business, and then I hope there will be a little proper refreshment for us!" and he looked at Catherine as if to insinuate that the provision of creature comforts for the party was on her shoulders.

But Catherine always declined any kind of responsibility. What she did must always be of free will and without compulsion.

And as Ryder turned, he noticed Eleanor and her companion standing together laughing and chatting as if they had known each other for years, and something in the deferential attitude of the man and the slightly excited manner of the girl gave him an immediate shock.

"Mary!" he said under his breath, "what on earth is that fellow doing with Miss Carradus! How does he know her?"

Mary started at his self-revealing tone, and she somehow felt suddenly as if she owed her brother an apology.

"I'm sorry, Teddie; I really do not know why he has turned up. I understand that Polly performed the introduction. But you know I can't help it now. We cannot be rude, and I shall be bound to ask him to join us at tea."

"I really don't see why?" said Ryder aggressively. "He is a man I particularly object to!"

"Oh come, Ryder!" laughed Catherine. "You do get such impressions! Take life more easily, my boy. Besides. you are so terribly unsociable to your own class. There is a great danger in only enjoying the society of people in a lower rank than yourself. They may be very delightful, and very deferential, and it may be charming to feel yourself always cleverer, and better off, and more important than those around you; but it is shocking training! Besides, remember your Democratic principles! If all men are equal, perhaps those in your own position may be worthy of some small consideration!"

Catherine dearly loved an opportunity of getting a good shot at Ryder, and if she had been a trifle less easy-going and inconsequent, her words might have had some effect, for Catherine very seldom spoke otherwise than with shrewdness; but as it was, her little tirade only made him feel extremely ill-tempered, and he turned away hastily in case he should show too plainly how he regarded it.

Besides, he felt it hardly fair that he should have his tea *en déshabille*, and work himself hot and untidy, whilst this interloper—this handsome country gentleman, should have full leisure to entertain and ingratiate himself with the woman he had quite decided upon as his wife. And, as he turned off to the tea duties, he was the more annoyed at hearing a light rippling peal of laughter—such happy laughter as he knew full well no remarks of his had ever yet called forth.

Now Ryder had never really failed in anything that he had seriously undertaken. He had had many difficulties, and much hard work, but so far life had shown him her successful side, and the idea that he, Ryder Glyn, might possibly be unsuccessful in anything upon which he had set his heart, came upon him with a strange sense of humiliation.

The thought that he might be considered in the light of a fortune hunter had suggested itself to him, on the first night when the spell of the girl fell upon him, but since then he had brushed the idea aside as unworthy of consideration.

So far he had passed through life under easy circumstances, with an assured position and an ample supply for all his needs. All Ryder's knowledge of the world's existence-battle had come to him secondhand. He himself had never known the storm-clouds of soul-distressful struggle, of maddening necessity, of the awful nightmare of failure, of unpreventable disaster, that clings round the early years of many a brave young heart, and it was to his credit, that in spite of his own personal ease, he had never relaxed his efforts; had worked as hard, had taken as good a degree, was as effective a lawyer, as though he were fighting for his own foothold on the world's crowded stage.

As junior partner with his father he was possessed of a substantial income of his own, and he also enjoyed a handsome share of his mother's settlement. Besides that, the Glyn family was a solid one. Money was spent freely for comfort and for culture, but was not lost in luxurious extravagance or show.

The Glyns had for generations been the Glyns of Farbiggin, and in this unassailable position they were content. As contentment has a wonderful knack of saving income and keeping capital together, so each succeeding generation found itself a little wealthier than the one before it.

Therefore it was possible for Ryder to consider the person before the property, and in all honesty to ignore the £100,000 which would have been a temptation to many.

Still, he had so far considered Eleanor's position as his father's ward, as to decide that it would ill become him to make anything like love to her until she had passed her twenty-first birthday.

It was one thing, however, to hold aloof from Eleanor in order that she might peacefully enjoy her maiden solitude for a twelvemonth longer, it was quite another to leave her to the companionship of a dangerous rival, and it showed how new Ryder was to the sensation of love that he should have dreamed it possible to keep such a resolve without a severe struggle; and to-day he discovered in a moment how completely he had in his own mind bespoken the girl for himself.

Curiously, the glimpse of possible failure for once destroyed his nerve and filled him with immediate despair, and during the short walk from the carriage to the cottages, from whence the tea was to be dispensed, Ryder had buried his chances, and was making up the form of words in which he should wish Eleanor joy, on the announcement of her engagement to her present companion.

But Eleanor was by no means willing to forego any of the joys of the day, and when the Vicarage children went rushing off, and Rob cried out excitedly, "Oh, Miss Carradus, ar'n't you coming to help to pour out the tea?" she turned with a laughing nod to Calthwaite, "You may go along and rest yourself again! I am going to work!" and she seized hold of Rob's hand and ran forward to the scene of action.

And Calthwaite, strolling after her, was soon as busily engaged in filling the quickly emptying mugs of the boys and girls, as if he had been a Sunday-school teacher all his life.

"If some of the men at the club could see me now!" he thought, laughing to himself.

And if some of the men had seen him, they would merely have whistled low and said to themselves or each other, "And what's in the wind now!"

As Eleanor passed from one group to another, her face rosy with the exertion of carrying a great stone jug full of the sweet mixture, and as she laughed with the boys and girls and took their jokes merrily, and apologised when her jug was empty and ran away for more, and spilled it on the way back and mocked at her own misfortune, there were many who gave her the fullest attention and who were not slow in pronouncing their opinion.

Eleanor knew no one, and was unconsciously polite to all—even the rude stare of Jane Ann, who held out her mug impertinently, and called her Miss Carradus with a strong emphasis on the Miss, did not disconcert her.

"She's a proper Scarthsider, is yon lass!" remarked old Betsy Hutton to her husband. "Looks ta, David, she's up to

their tricks a'ready! She waint give yon lad any more tea because she seed him team his last lot on to t' grund."

The tea jugs were kept severely in the possession of the teachers and certified helpers, until the boys and girls had been served, but after that any one might form a private tea-party; so group after group of parents and grown-up people abstracted jugs for themselves, and made pleasant little picnic parties under the great trees, according to their several social distinctions.

As it was impossible to provide a cut-up bread and butter and cake tea for such a large number, each ticket-holder was provided with a sixteen-ounce, special spiced, fruit bun or loaf; and it was surprising to notice what inroads the children, who had been on the alert for fun and pleasure from early morning to three o'clock in the afternoon, could make on this large quantity.

Every one had a bun, and the Vicarage children were very anxious to secure their rightful share.

"I'll give you sixpence, Rob," called Ryder after her, "if you will eat all that bun before you go to bed to-night."

"Done!" she cried, taking a first substantial bite.

"She'll manage it!" he remarked laughingly to a little group of old people who were busily bringing out their own private stores to add to the meal.

"Mannige!" retorted old Betsy; "yon lass wad mannige two on 'em easy!"

"Well, do you want any more tea, you old folks?" and he waited, supporting the jug with his left hand. "It will never do for the old ladies to go back to Farbiggin telling every one that we had grudged them their tea!"

"Eye! stop a bit, Mr. Ryder!—it's ower hot. Bide while I sup this."

"All right, Betsy. Well now, don't you call this a lovely day? Not much rheumatics about this time!"

"It's grand! Why, Mr. Ryder, it va near aulus grand fer Ottarthwaite. What I'se bin va near ivery Wissuntid sin afoor thee and Miss Mary theer larnt to suck yer thumbs!"

"Nonsense, Betsy!" he retorted; "why I don't believe the school was built in those days. You are romancing!"

"Romancin'! Tellin' lees does ta mean? Fer sham, Mr. Ryder. T' school was built reet enough, and theer was me, and happen a scoor mair as is in this park noo, as went tull Geordie Glyn' Bible-class. Lads and lass togidder, and him no better nor a girt lad hissell——"

"Really? Well you look thriving, any way, Mrs. Hutton; the old school has done well by you."

"Eye, and t' auld lad's proper strang and a'! He's bad to beat at his age!" and she turned to her husband, who was sitting next to her with his handkerchief spread carefully over his knees to save his Sunday trousers.

"Why it's sixty year this Wissuntid sin t' auld lad, he says to me, 'Betsy lass, will ta ha ma?' And I says, 'David lad, if I wed tha will ta sarce ma?' and he says, 'Gie ma a good yam to come back tull, and Is'e niver sarce tha!'"

"And did you never sauce her, David?" asked Ryder, his eyes twinkling, for he knew the old man's acknowledged vigour and the sharpness of his tongue.

"Why, naá! Not to call sarced! Nobbut noo and agen when t' childer was a bit boddersome, I telt her as she mud kep 'em oot o't road a bit mair!"

"And what did you say to that, Betsy?"

"Why I telt him as I hed hed t' childer a' t' day, and it was a job if their father couldn't do wi' 'em a bit of a neet!"

"And noo," put in the old man with a sideways nod at his wife, "theer's naa peace even though t' girt 'uns is all grawn up, for they bring their barns, and t' auld lass, she's fair daft wi' her grandchilder."

"Ger oot! And what about t' auld grandfather, eh?" and she turned sharply round. "Look theer, Mr. Ryder!"

And the whole group joined in the laugh as they saw one child leaning against the old man's knee, and another pulling himself up by his shoulder, and a third pushing a sticky little hand into his coat pocket.

"Wha spoils t' barns, eh?" and the old body laughed noisily.

At the moment Eleanor passed with Arthur Calthwaite, who was trying in vain to relieve her of her heavy jug.

"So yon's t' lass fra Germany!" said Betsy eagerly.

"Eh, moother, I telt tha!" answered one of her married daughters sitting beside her.

"Noo, Mr. Ryder!" and Betsy pulled him down towards her, "thee off and wed yon lass! It's aboot time as thoo was sattled. Young chaps like thee wi' plenty o' brass hes no call to keep t' lasses waitin'. I was at thy father's weddin', and I mun be at thine!"

"Mother, behave!" said the husband shortly.

"Thee behave thisell, lad?" she retorted. "What, it's summat if I can't say what I like to Geordie Glyn' young 'un. Why, yon lass theer, is hawf a Scarthsider, and we'se a' be prood if she weds a Glyn!"

But Ryder pulled his arm away and laughed.

"Look, 'dad! I'se med him blush! Theer's grand roses! Naá theer's na need to sham thisell. Nobbut thee be sharp lad, or yon feller ower t' theer 'ull be afoor tha!"

"You're a grand matchmaker, Mrs. Hutton!" said Ryder good-naturedly. "When I've settled the day I'll be sure to let you know. My wedding would hardly be complete without the two oldest Scarth scholars, and one of them the handsomest old lady on the ground."

"Noo, thoo's blushin', grandmoother!" said one of the children; and Betsy, smiling with the compliment, expostulated with her customary "Ger along wi' tha! Well thoo let me kna in good time, so as I can save my suvereigns fer t' weddin' present!"

And now at last the weary workers had a moment to themselves. Mary's carriage was drawn up quite close to the tree, and Catherine was busily attending to her wants, and those of Sybil who was seated in great state beside her.

Maud and Polly turned themselves into waitresses, and were most diligent in plying the circle with the dainty viands.

Rob resolutely resisted all food.

"When Uncle Ryder has offered me sixpence, if I eat this

bun to-day, I cannot eat anything else, for sixpence is not to be despised."

So she worked away steadily at her sixteen ounces, quite regardless of the remonstrances of the others.

"Don't you think, grandpapa, that it's rather rude of people to talk in languages that other people don't understand?" asked Polly, apparently apropos of nothing in particular.

Mr. Glyn paused. "My dear, that is rather an awkward sentence. I am not good at conundrums!"

"Well, you know, grandpapa, I was looking after Miss Carradus quite nicely, and we were engaged in interesting conversation, when Mr. Calthwaite came up interfering, and in a few minutes they were talking German, and I could hardly understand a single word!" and Polly looked up at the young man with something like a scowl.

"Don't you learn German at school, my dear?" asked Mr. Glyn peacefully.

"Oh, not the kind of German they were talking, grandpapa!"

"We must speak to your father, my dear. Henry, I am afraid that your school fees are being wasted. Here is a young person who is learning the wrong kind of German!"

But the Vicar was round the other side of the tree, searching for a special biscuit for Sybil.

"Now, grandpapa, you really are very tiresome," expostulated Polly. "It was not about my German I asked you, but whether you don't think it was very rude."

"I suppose, Miss Polly," said Arthur Calthwaite gracefully. "that you consider that I owe you some apology. Please accept it, and take at the same time this piece of pie."

"Oh, well!" she returned most ungraciously, "I suppose I shall have to accept the apology, and I only hope that it will never occur again. Oh no, thanks, I don't want the pie."

Everybody laughed, and Rob broke in: "Don't be silly, Polly. Remember Miss Carradus loves German, and so does Aunt Mary, but we don't, and Uncle Ryder doesn't—and grandpapa doesn't, so I expect she thought Mr. Calthwaite quite a find. Now didn't you, Miss Carradus?"

Rob was standing in front of her with her legs stretched wide apart, and her huge bun in her hand.

Eleanor blushed slightly and replied sedately, "Of course it is very amusing to meet with the German in such very charming English surroundings."

"And such German!" laughed Calthwaite lightly. "Why, Miss Polly, if you had only understood all my blunders, any respect you might possibly have for me would have vanished."

"Well, it's a blessing, Uncle Ryder, that you are properly English, and don't worry us with German," said Polly, settling herself close up against her young uncle.

"It is certainly as well to keep in your good books, Polly,' he replied; "but there, I think we had better see if Aunty Mary has everything."

But the Vicar was looking well after his sister, who was enjoying the beauties of the scene, and chatting to one and another who came up to speak to her, while Sybil sat very wide-eyed listening to the conversation, and filling up every pause with her twittering little tongue.

And meanwhile round another tree there was a further group, consisting of William Carradus and his wife and family, little Jacky and Nell, Nell's brother and sisters, and Sarah Jameson and John Fleming, all partaking of Janet's ample store of provisions.

Dicky felt himself extremely important, and begged that Tom also might share Mrs. Carradus's extra dainties; and Tom was allowed the privilege and enjoyed the honour, but, like a true sportsman, reserved the provision until after his race.

And as they all sat there enjoying themselves, there were Scarthsiders who regarded them suspiciously, watching if perchance they could trace signs of that upliftedness which must certainly appear sooner or later with the possession of "£6,000 amang 'em."

Bella Lancaster, Jane Ann and Ben, Katie Benson, and some others seated at a little distance, commented in anything but flattering terms on them. But there were special reasons

for jealousy on the part of most of these mentioned. As for Katie Benson, she was feeling herself slighted to an unusual degree. She had been coming to the conclusion that her "boy" Dicky was getting a little uncertain, and she had therefore made overtures to Tom, which had on the whole been favourably received, and now to see him peacefully absorbed into the Great House circle, while she herself was left out, was quite too much for her equanimity.

"Looks ta!" she exclaimed petulantly to Bella. "Theer's Tom gerring prood noo! I wonder wha will be t' next? It's summut when t' lads teks to currin pasty and pork pies, leavin' their lasses to fill theersells wi' t' school bun!"

John Fleming, however, was happy at having at last secured a word or two with Nell, and, as it was well acknowledged that he was courting her, there was no need for him to disguise his intention; and Nell, being happy and in good spirits, was her most charming self, and when she promised him that she would meet him down by the river as soon as the races were over and he was at liberty, his cup of happiness was full.

The races were immensely successful. Dicky standing up in Miss Glyn's carriage, had the joy of seeing Tom triumphantly win his first heat and then his final.

"In the midst of life we are in death," and there was an instant during the excitement when Mary's eyes filled with sudden tears—the instant when pale little Dicky shrilled forth his ringing cheer as Tom rushed against the tape at the winning-post.

And Dicky, looking down for sympathy in his joy, saw the dimmed eyes, and exclaimed in astonishment, "Why, Miss Mary, and ar'n't you glad as Tom's beat?"

And Mary smiled back at the boy and replied, "Oh yes, dear, very, very glad! Nearly as glad as you are!"

And when some time later Tom came up to the carriage for the prize which Mary was presenting, she shook hands and wished him victory through life, and the boy at her side remarked tranquilly, "It's queer, Miss Mary, but I don't seem as if I cared about yon prize. I is glad as he's getten it!"

Eleanor was exceedingly amused at the races, and she could not help admiring the infinite patience of the Vicar and Ryder as they prepared the half-naked, stocking-footed competitors, and settled disputes and kept somewhat turbulent waters, smooth.

Calthwaite looked on also and joined in the enthusiasm, adding special prizes with great generosity, and enjoyed the fun because of the delight of the girl, who was entering into the spirit of the occasion with such zest.

"I telt tha, David, as she was a proper Scarthsider!" remarked old Betsy, as she noted Eleanor straining herself forward and cheering with the rest.

And Eleanor thought that "Prince Arthur" was quite the most charmingly good-natured man she had come across for a long time, and she was exceedingly sorry when, as had been previously arranged, the time came for her to drive home with Miss Glyn.

"And have you really to go so soon, Miss Carradus?" Calthwaite asked, in a disappointed tone.

"Yes, I am afraid so," she returned regretfully. "Oh, this has been a delightful day!"

"Quite a Red Letter day to me!" he returned, looking at her fearlessly. "I can only hope——"

"Eleanor dear, if you don't mind?" called Mary.

And Eleanor, after giving her hand for a moment, in which time he managed to bestow a sudden intense pressure, jumped into the carriage.

And during the return journey Eleanor chattered about anything and everything in her usual manner, but never once mentioned Calthwaite; and Mary decided that young girls were an anxiety, and that she was very tired.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE happy little river Moss, which hurried along from Farbiggin down to the sleepy sands, had made its way far below

the level of the Park, and there was a steep bank, partly wooded and partly covered with coarse tufted grass, which led from the flat ground above to the shingly bed below.

On the occasion of the Whitsuntide excursion the junior boys and girls were strictly forbidden to go anywhere near the river, as this part of the ground took them out of the sight of the teachers, and there was a certain amount of danger to reckless youngsters.

But to the grown-up people there was refreshment in being able to get away from the crowd, and to wander along the banks and hear the cool gurgle of the clear water far below so busily intensifying the colourings of the rocks and pebbles of its river bed. And Nell, seated on a bank littered with last year's ruddy beech leaves through which the green moss crept up smiling, enjoyed the peacefulness of the solitude she had found. She was thinking thoughts, odd, inconsequent thoughts, which chased each other through her mind without any apparent connection. Keenly alive in all her senses to her surroundings, she sighed with utter pleasure as her eyes took in the loveliness of the scene in front of her.

The river so far below appeared so mysteriously from round the wooded corner to her right, and disappeared down a sudden drop in the rocky bed, and the roar of the plunge, subdued by the distance, filled all the air with vibrating harmony. And just across the river the ground ascended in copse wood, the tender greens and browns fast covering the darkness of the wintry trunks and branches, and beneath, in reposeful simplicity, lay the under-colour of deep hyacinth blue and the lightest emerald shades of the new grass and uncurling bracken and the pinky whiteness of the delicate anemone; while away above and beyond the woodlands lay the young cornfields, and the quickly swelling hay-grass breathing in contentedly the sweet summer air under the light of the evening sky.

"Yon river hes coom from Farbiggin," thought Nell, and with the thought, her mind leaped back to her old life and her new ambitions.

To-day she had been very happy. Yes, happy, in spite of the bitterness of seeing her rival fêted and admired. Happy, for she, the 'Bacca Queen, had also been fêted and complimented and chaffed and flattered, and even now she was waiting for some one whom every one was telling her was breaking his heart for her! And yet, what was the good of it all? What was coming out of all this life of hers? Her eyes looked at the beautiful scene, but her mind saw the little kitchen at home to-night—the children tired and cross, her mother drunk, and either noisy or sickenly fulsome. And to-morrow the tobacco shop! Oh, the weary round of it all! That girl, Eleanor Carradus, had just driven away in a carriage and pair to comfort, refinement, and rest. She had noted Mr. Calthwaite dangling round after her. She wondered vaguely what it felt like to be courted by a real gentleman.

Again she thought of John Fleming. He was a good lad, very—but that was the worst of it. He was too good for her: he was religious, and she—what was she? And then she took to wondering why he had not kept his promise. It was getting late. All the time was slipping away. It was too bad of him not to come! Not, of course, that she cared. He needn't come if he didn't want to!

But John Fleming, panting to fulfil his promise, has been captured by Ryder, who has insisted that he, and he alone, was capable of helping him to set off his balloons; and between duty and pleasure, duty, as usual with John, conquered, and Nell waited in vain.

Soon after the carriage had driven away Calthwaite managed to take his leave of Catherine, who was quite preoccupied, thinking how she could best catch the Vicar, and make him see that all the children arrived safely at the boat. So she held out her hand in her most distant manner, and hardly heard him remark that he meant to follow the river path home.

The grounds of Calthwaite came down to the river-side, about three miles further up the river in the Farbiggin direction, and so there was nothing strange in his taking that way.

So he wandered off, and no one thought anything more about him.

A path ran in and out amongst the woods and fields all the way to Farbiggin, and as Calthwaite came along he discovered Nell seated on the mossy bank with a far away look in her great brown eyes. She was seated a little off the regular footpath, so he walked along the grass softly.

Nell was startled by hearing a voice close beside her saying gently, "Will you allow me to pass?"

Now Nell had chosen a position where she thought Fleming would have considerable difficulty in finding her, and she had promised herself some fun when she heard him searching about in vain, so she turned and looked round in some surprise.

"What for?" she asked testily, looking straight up at the man standing beside her.

"Oh, there is no need if it troubles you!"

Nell recognised Mr. Calthwaite at once. She knew him perfectly well by sight, and she had moreover noticed his attentions to Eleanor.

"Naá, it's no bother, but this is nut your road!"

"Perhaps not, but I should like to see for myself what you find so lovely here. There must be something beautiful to look at to judge by your face!"

Nell looked him up and down as if to take his measure, and a shade of suspicion crossed her face, for Nell was, as she herself would have expressed it, "Not exactly a fool!"

And Calthwaite noted the expression and decided that some cleverness would be needed to grasp this quarry, but he also decided that the game was well worth while.

"But perhaps you are waiting for some one?"

He smiled insinuatingly and the girl took offence instantly, and her pride rose to think that he should imagine she was waiting for some one who had failed her.

"Naá, I'se nut!" she remarked stolidly.

"Then perhaps you can spare a moment to show me the beauties of the place. I don't often have the pleasure——"

"I wasn't waitin' for you, any way!" she interrupted. "Happen you'd better be off after yon carriage, and get a fortune for yerself off my cousin Eleanor Carradus!"

"Your cousin!" He was surprised into showing his surprise.

Nell laughed. "Aye, yon Eleanor Carradus as you've been carrying on wi' t' maist of t' afternoon is my cousin. Leastways her father and my mother was brother and sister. What do you mek o' that?"

Here was certainly a surprise. Calthwaite had heard, of course, that Eleanor possessed Scarth relatives. That had been a matter for common talk and common surmising, but this particular *dénouement* caused him to pull himself up for a moment, and reconsider his plans.

"I did not see you talking much to her!" he remarked incredulously.

Nell laughed again, such a musical, rich laugh. "Wad a lass wi' a fortune behint her, talk tull a 'Bacca shop lass, think ya?"

"Ah!" A sudden rush of remembrance. The High Street. The tall girl walking amongst the tobacco factory girls. This was the connection that had been worrying him all the afternoon. Of course the tall girl in the street, and the tall, white frocked figure sitting on the mossy grass were identical.

Again she laughed, quizzically. "Why, what's wrang?"

If Jack did not choose to come (and Nell was growing decidedly impatient) there could be no harm in having a little fun. She would pretend she was a lady, and find out what it felt like to be courted by a gentleman. For Nell was perfectly aware that the manner of the man meant more than mere politeness.

And Calthwaite, who had been intending sport from the beginning, continued, "Oh, nothing, only now I know where I once saw you before. It was in the High Street."

"I'se sin you many a hundred times in t' High Street. Why that's nowt! Was I, think ya, in my 'bacca frock?"

"I don't remember the frock," he replied, looking at her

earnestly, "but I remember the face! It was one I could never forget!"

Nell suddenly began to feel a little bit solitary, and she made an attempt to rise.

"Oh, don't go just yet!" he pleaded; "why I don't even know your name yet!"

"My name's easy enough to remember! It's t' saám as t' other lass's—Eleanor Carradus—nobbut they ca' me Nell."

"Nell!" He repeated the little syllable almost tenderly. "That is a nicer name than Eleanor. It suits you exactly!"

"Rubbish!" she retorted; yet still bent on fun she waited to hear more. It would be nice for once to hear what a gentleman thought about her. It would be fun to tease Sarah about it afterwards—Sarah, who lectured her on her lightness. She wondered, moreover, what he had been saying to her cousin, and a wild desire seized her to see whether "Nell of the Scarth" could not beat "Eleanor of The Abbey!" She would rejoice if she could prove her charms superior to those of that golden-haired chit, who had done her and her family such injury.

And all the while Nell thought she was quite able to take care of herself.

"Nell!" called a voice from above them, "Nell!"

Calthwaite started, but Nell touched him lightly on the arm. "Bide whar you are. It's now't!"

"Nell, where are you?" and the voice sounded disappointedly.

Still the girl sat motionless, and the owner of the voice passed away down the footpath towards the left.

"Nell! Nell!" They heard it fainter and more faintly and then no more, and all was as it had been again.

And Nell thought to herself, "He should ha coom when he said. I wasn't med to bide all t' efternoon for him!"

And then Nell knew that she had acted meanly and wrongly and quite unworthily, and if she had dared she would have jumped up, and called out in her turn, "Jack—Jack! It's a' reet. I'se here!"

But Calthwaite had already seen his chance, and he took it as he said, with a half-smile on his lips, "Ah, then you were waiting for some one after all! Rather a tardy lover. Shall I call him for you?"

And Nell looking up defiantly, lied in his face, remarking with a laugh, "Call wha? Theer's more Nells on t' Scarth than Nell Carradus!"

And the smile diplomatically faded from Calthwaite's face, as he threw himself down on the ground beside her, and remarked with all earnestness, "I beg your pardon, Miss Nell. I hope you do not mind my using that dear little name?"

"What a cheek this man hes!" thought Nell.

It struck her as curious that he should be able to say pretty things so freely and so easily. She had been used to having compliments, but they were usually jerked at her, and thrown at her, and especially promising ones were generally broken off half-way, ending in a stammer or an awkward pause which always made her feel inclined to mock.

So being determined, she knew not why, to play the game out, she retorted with a toss of her head, "It meks na odds what you call ma! I'se aulus getten Nell and I'se used tull it!"

"That's all right!" he returned serenely, "then we understand each other now, and can enjoy ourselves; but I have first of all a confession to make to you!"

She looked at him inquiringly.

"Yes," he thought, "she's worth it! She's worth a dozen of the other. By Jove, what a style—head, hair, forehead, eyes, mouth, chin! Angel or she-devil, I wonder?"

And as he paused she returned—

"Well? Confess away. Pity I isn't auld Father Michaelson!"

"My confession is very short," he replied very gently. "I only want to tell you, Miss Nell, that I have made a mistake this afternoon—I have been courting the wrong cousin!"

Had she won, then, so soon? A deep red dyed Nell's neck and face.

Was it shame or triumph?

"Are you courtin' now?" she asked pointedly.

"What do you think?"

"Naá, I kna nowt aboot gentry ways."

"You have never told me yet what you think so lovely in this place you have chosen!" he remarked, gracefully sliding away from her question.

"Do you know Tennyson?" she asked unexpectedly.

"Oh yes! Why?"

"Then say me some!"

"Say you some?"

"Eye, I thowt as t' gentry was fond o' poetry!"

But Calthwaite could not have remembered a line of Tennyson to save a kingdom, and Nell made a mental note of the fact to the distinct uplifting of Jack in her estimation.

"I like practical poetry the best," he replied readily, returning to a phrase he had found useful once before that day.

"What's yon sort?"

"Oh, the poetry of life and sunshine and beautiful women!"

"Do you mean as you think I'se a beautiful woman?" The question sounded self-conscious, but this time Nell spoke in all seriousness. She really wanted to know. "You needn't think as I'm shamed on it," she continued, "I didn't mek mysell, that's certain."

"Miss Nell!" he returned impulsively, "you are wonderful! You are divine—you are glorious! Why, if you only cared you might——"

"But as I's only a 'Bacca lass, Mr. Calthwaite, you'd best stop," she interrupted. Even Nell was alarmed at his ardour. "Theer niver was no good com o' gentlefolk talkin' to workin' lasses. Oh, I kna weel enough!" The tone was very bitter now. The dream was fading, and the echo of that disappointed "Nell, Nell!" was in her ears, and the wind began to blow a little cold against her thinly-covered shoulders.

She rose abruptly. "What time is it?"

Calthwaite took out his watch and spoke reassuringly, "Oh,

not late, not late at all. Only half-past six. Oh, please don't hurry!" as he saw her startled face.

"Half-past six!" she repeated, in a kind of scream, "Then I'se missed the boat. They start at half-past six, and they are nearly a mile away!"

Here was luck. Really Calthwaite could hardly control his countenance to say, "I'm very sorry, very sorry indeed."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the girl, more to herself than her companion. "Here's a mess! Get along!" and she glared at Calthwaite. "What did you come botherin' folk for and complimentin' and playin' the fool? Stick to thy awn sheep!"

"I am really awfully sorry, Miss Nell. I am, indeed!" and his voice sounded exceedingly penitent; "I never dreamed that your party left the Park so early. Now, tell me—how can I help you?"

He knew that there was no help, but that a long walk home was inevitable, and he was already gloating over the lucky chance so simply thrown in his way.

It was certainly hopeless to try and catch the boat, that Nell knew.

But Nell was not easily beaten, so she tried to put the matter off with a laugh.

"Help? Naá! You can't help. I'se joost hev to walk it, that's a', and sarve me reet for listenin' to sic foolery. What, it's nobbut five mile, and theer's many a scoor o' young uns as 'ull ha tramped theer and back. But I mun hurry! I mun be i' Farbiggin by t' time t' boats is in!"

"Then we will set off at once, Miss Nell. The river path is quite the shortest, and certainly the pleasantest."

"We!" said Nell; "I'se gaáin alaán!"

"Oh, Miss Nell!"

"None o' your Miss Nell's for me. I tell ye I'se gaáin alaán!" and she scrambled down on to the path beneath and set off in an easy, rapid stride homewards.

Now Nell would not have for a moment admitted even to

herself that she was afraid, yet she kept up her steady pace, and never turned to see if she were followed.

But Calthwaite followed, keeping her well in sight, and waited his opportunity. It is a difficult matter to keep two strings to one bow in right good order, and Calthwaite was glad of a few minutes to consider whether he was not after all acting foolishly and perhaps a trifle madly.

If this girl striding along in front of him, this girl with the step of a princess and the pose of a Grecian goddess, were really the cousin of that golden nugget he had just been amusing himself with all the afternoon, he was possibly playing a risky game—he might find himself risking his chance of marriage with the one, in his chase after sport with the other.

Of course marriage with the "Princess" was out of the question, could not even come as a passing thought through his brain; but good heavens! men must enjoy themselves somehow, and it was so deathly dull at home. Girls of that class were not like ordinary women. They enjoyed attention, and he was giving her as much as he expected to take.

The stately Lady Margaret had bored him only less than he had bored her, and at the sight of the figure in front of him he threw aside the last remembrance of her with positive rapture. Of course this quest was a risk, but it was too late now. He must get something out of this girl—if not to-night—well, there was a vague future, and again he remembered how exceedingly dull he was. At any rate it was not for him to let her slip away.

So Calthwaite quickened his pace, and the girl quickened hers, and then considering that she never fled from any one or anything in her life, and feeling secure in the power of her strong frame and muscular shoulders, she allowed the inevitable, and as he caught her up she exclaimed mockingly, "I can gaa fast, you see, Mr. Calthwaite, when I'se in a hurry. Why, you're quite out of breath! There's a soft bank theer to rest on—lig thisell doon."

"Miss Nell," he expostulated, "I cannot think why you are so rude, you know!"

Nell laughed a short laugh and kept up the pace.

"Theer's happen two mile yet to your house, so I'd best wish you good neet! You'll niver ha' no breath to keep up wi' me!"

"But, Miss Nell, I don't understand. Surely you are not afraid of me?"

"Afraid!" Nell repeated the humiliating word softly to herself. "Mr. Calthwaite, I'se best be plain! If I was a lady I wadn't be afraid, but being what I is, you'd best go!"

"You don't mean to say that you think I wish to treat you otherwise than a lady? Oh, Miss Nell!" and he dropped his voice reproachfully.

Nell said nothing but stalked forward again.

"I know what you mean! Oh, I know what you mean well enough, but Miss Nell, do you imagine that I could think of you as I do, and must think of you, and dare to treat you with disrespect?"

"I don't know what you call disrespect," the girl replied over her shoulder, "but I do kna what I think on a man as follews a lass as doesn't want him!"

"But you do want me, Miss Nell!" and he laid his hand on her arm.

Nell turned on him fiercely, shaking him off with a quick jerk. "You're a liar! I did! Yes, I did; but I don't now! I know your sort. Gaa to my cousin. Follow her when she doesn't want you, and see what she hes to say!"

But Calthwaite, not yet knowing the girl, came forward and again put his hand on her shoulder, and said softly, "Now, Nell, won't you——"

"If I hed George Glyn for a guardian do you think as you wad dare to touch ma?" the girl cried, springing from him and turning round with her hands clenched tightly.

Calthwaite was struck dumb at the fury of the girl, and, having an eye to the future, and being of a dogged character when he set himself, he decided that a handsome retreat was at present the most prudent and the most telling stroke.

He waited until he imagined the storm waves had somewhat

abated, then he said courteously, yet with a certain reserved reproach in his voice—

"Of course if you choose to misunderstand—if you choose to think that I am unworthy of your respect, I have nothing more to say. I have tried to show you that I feel nothing but kindliness towards you, and when you go home I think you will realise that I have done nothing towards yourself unworthy of a gentleman—and a lover! Good evening!" And solemnly and deferentially raising his hat, he walked quickly past; turning off on to a little footpath that led to the high-road, he left her.

When Nell was quite sure that he had really gone, she gave a sigh of mingled relief and disappointment.

The right side of her was relieved, but the little incident again, brought forward that old, weary question—

"If I had been a lady!" There was the point. She was nothing. Nothing but a nameless wastrel, whom any man considered he had a right to take advantage of.

The old hints and arguments so oft reiterated by her mother rose before her again, and she was frightened to find that she was pleased that this beauty of hers had been corroborated by the expression of this man—a gentleman, one who had been about the world, and had seen many women. This man had told her to-night that she was beautiful, and had openly declared himself her lover.

How she had in her heart of hearts prized the little title she received from her simple Scarth courtiers. But suppose the court should be widened; suppose—Oh, the idea was intoxicating.

So Nell humoured the ambitions pressing through her mind, and the subtle flattery worked as she hurried along. Sometimes the narrow path crossed the open field, then it turned under the tall trees which shadowed Nell protectingly as she passed under them, now it pressed through the plantations of hazel, and wych elms, and raspberry canes, and brambles and briars which stretched themselves across the path, and clung now and again to Nell's muslins.

But for once Nell passed unconscious of the allurements of nature around her, and she never even saw the wonder of the evening sky, and she knew not that she herself walked along tinted with the sunset glory.

It was the flattery—the flattery expressed so much more in the tone than in any words said—that was working so insidiously.

The quiet manners, the refined voice, had been sweet to her ears. Then when she came to consider the events of the last short hour, she could not recall that her companion had done anything disrespectful regarding her.

Had she after all been nothing but a terror-stricken girl? The blood flamed under her dark complexion again at the humiliating thought.

For Nell knew that she—she, Nell Carradus—had been frightened; she realised that her cool, insolent manner had been expressly designed to cover the dread beating of her turbulent heart.

The horror of what had happened to others had seized upon her. She had felt her maiden purity challenged, this part of herself which she had so often before preserved with a fierce jealousy as being the last strand which linked her to the higher world around, and which she had so long and so proudly regarded with complaisancy; and all the womanhood in her had leaped up to protect this maidenhood from touch or taint.

But as she grew calmer it struck her with mortifying disgust that perhaps it had all been a mistake, and that the man had meant no harm; had, perhaps, really intended honourable courtship.

So, with her mind in a whirl, she reached Farbiggin, and found all the streets crowded with returning excursionists, both from the boats and from the railway station.

In answer to many inquiries Nell laughed gaily, and proclaimed the fact that she had missed the boat and walked home.

And Sarah, meeting her in the High Street, expostulated with her; "But, Nell, what didn't ta come on to the Canal

bank for, we were all wondering where thoo was? Whichiver way did ta gaa?"

"Why, Sally lass, does ta think as when I found I'd missed t' boat as I was gaain' to mek a fule o' mysell by trampin' on t' towin'-path all t' way amang t' childer as hesn' tickuts?"

But somehow she neglected to make fun with Sarah over the real adventure of the evening.

And when she met Fleming she passed with a grim look of displeasure. But he came up boldly, and walked beside her and began his apology, "Nell dear, I was so sorry, I——"

"Oh, don't thee apologise, John Fleming; I can wait thy time—oh no, it meks na matter. Good-neet!"

And she pushed him away, and as John Fleming never pressed his attentions on Nell he left her, and his explanation remained unsaid.

Nell turned and looked at him as he walked away, and she very nearly cried out, "Jack, Jack, it's a' reet;" but again the words died on her lips and she let him go, and on reaching home she found all there exactly in the condition she had pictured to herself as she sat by the sunlit river.

CHAPTER XXV

AFTER her husband's death the one task in life which Mrs. Calthwaite had set herself was the preservation of the comfort and temper of her only son Arthur.

The comfort of her only daughter Gertrude was of comparatively little importance. Gertrude was getting on now. She was well past thirty, she was extremely plain, she had never to her mother's knowledge had an offer of marriage, and her temper was a negligible factor, as it never rose beyond the boundary line of mild remonstrance or cynical remark.

And of course Arthur was the heir to Calthwaite, though, curiously his father had preferred to leave his wife in full possession for the remainder of her life.

This arrangement was extremely resented by the son, who

felt justified in expressing his annoyance quite freely, not only at home, where it was a constant topic of grievance, but to all his off-hand acquaintances.

Mrs. Calthwaite, from the moment of her husband's death, took up an apologetic attitude towards her son, and her whole life had been an apology ever since.

In fact, as she continually told the long-suffering Gertrude, "You see, my dear, we must consider that Arthur is naturally disappointed, and any little thing I can do to make him happy, and feel independent and contented, is certainly my very first duty."

So Arthur came and went as he chose, received abundant allowance for all his outside expenses, and controlled everything that was done and arranged inside the home.

And Mrs. Calthwaite, having seriously set herself to the task of voluntarily effacing herself and her own concerns before her son, was sometimes surprised and a little hurt when the son demanded that effacement as a right.

Not that Calthwaite ever forgot himself so far as to be actually rude to his mother. But he had long learnt to steadily pursue his own way, and with a smile or an argument to bow her before him.

Mrs. Calthwaite was on the whole happy in her servitude. For when she bowed, he smiled—and to be smiled upon by Arthur was this woman's present earthly bliss. And notwithstanding the fact that naturally Mrs. Calthwaite was a shrewd woman, with a keen sense of humour and a high ideal, in the reaction which followed the shock of her husband's death, she had wilfully blinded herself to faults she understood far better than the wisest of those friends, who would have been delighted to instruct her. But life is short, and blindness is sometimes very comfortable.

That dull, conventional woman Gertrude had "no patience" with Arthur, and at times she told him so, which did no good, and only caused her a morning's irritation. But even a downright exasperating grievance is a relief in some very monotonous existences.

"My dear Gertrude," said her mother on Whit Tuesday evening, "I believe I hear Arthur at last. Ring the bell for dinner at once."

"Half an hour late," remarked Gertrude, rising. She was of medium height with a plain, sensible face with no pretensions to goods looks, but the faultlessly cut black evening gown and generally well-maided appearance did a great deal for Miss Calthwaite.

And then Arthur strolled in, in his morning garb, as though there were nothing at all the matter.

"Dinner is waiting, my dear!" said his mother, with a deprecating smile on her face.

"Ah, then I'd better go and dress," and he strolled away for another half-hour, thereby driving the kitchen department distracted, while Gertrude sat working for her latest Bazaar with a look on her face suggestive of mingled exasperation and resignation.

"You don't ask me where I have been, mother," Arthur remarked when the servant had finally left the room. He was arrayed in faultless evening dress and the subdued lampshine softened the faces of the three seated at the well-appointed and delicately decorated table.

Mrs. Calthwaite was instantly on the alert, beaming and smiling and inquiring for the required information.

"Well, dear, and what have you been doing? Something more interesting, I hope, than has fallen to the share of either Gertrude or me, I expect."

"Well, if you must know the truth, I have been to Ottarthwaite to help to play with the school children."

"The truth!" laughed his mother. "Now you cannot persuade me that school children were the object."

"Well, mother, then I must put you in the way of guessing by saying that I think it would be a good thing if you and Gertrude were to take the opportunity of calling at The Abbey and making the acquaintance of the new importation."

"Ah!" ejaculated Gertrude, raising her brows. "What another, Arthur, and so soon?"

He laughed pleasantly. "Yes another, madam! A man must marry, you know, and I certainly must if Calthwaite is to descend to a further generation. One has duties in life."

"Oh, of course," she returned. "Mother, won't you try some of those early strawberries?"

"Yes, dear, certainly, and give Arthur some. But, my dear boy, do tell me—this is most interesting. Of course she is pretty?"

Mrs. Calthwaite knew all about her son's serious ventures in the matrimonial market, and every girl who refused her jewel sank low, very low, in her estimation. Poor Lady Margaret! if she had only known what Mrs. Calthwaite wrote in her diary regarding her, and poor Mrs. Calthwaite, if she had only overheard what Lady Margaret said about her dear son, in strictest confidence, to her pet cousin the Hon. Madeline Beaufort!

"Pretty, of course, mother! She must be pretty to match my mother," and he bowed to her over his wineglass.

"Nonsense, Arthur!" yet she bridled and bloomed young again amidst her rich satin and old point lace.

"I suppose it is the Scarth heiress you are discussing," put in Gertrude sharply. "I wondered how many days you would be able to keep away from her."

"Right, madam, Eleanor Carradus is the child. The charm of the personality quite overbalances the incumbrances of the fortune!"

"Oh, of course; *cela va!*" she returned.

"Well, dear Gertrude," put in Mrs. Calthwaite, with alacrity, "we can call, of course. There is nothing to prevent that I know of. Let me see, this is Tuesday. Wednesday—no, that is the village cycle parade. Thursday—no, that's the usual tennis. Friday—yes, Friday, it will have to be Friday. I must not forget."

"Would you suggest our taking a bouquet with us, Arthur?" asked his sister. "Anything to oblige, you know."

"If you like," he returned still very pleasantly. "But I'll tell you what, madam, you might ask her to the tennis

Thursdays. They could get her out here somehow. Perhaps the Vicaress would bring her."

"Or Mr. Ryder Glyn," she suggested. "We want a few more men."

"Or Ryder Glyn," he returned in a matter-of-fact voice. "He promised me the other day to come out more regularly. His piety actually allows him to play tennis!"

"Well, mother, are you ready?" and Gertrude rose.

"Shall you be coming in, Arthur?" asked his mother, wistfully.

"Thanks, mother, no; I prefer a smoke.

So mother and daughter returned to their solitude and the son went to the apartment on which his mother had expended every device she could think of, which might tend to the comfort and enervating luxury of her boy.

Comfortably settled in a great lounge chair, he betook himself with diligence to his pipe, and to the task of drawing profiles and full-length sketches of the faces that were at the moment impressed on his brain.

And for one he drew of the piquant Eleanor, there was a dozen of the 'Bacca Queen.

Nell in the street. Nell seated on the mossy bank. Nell patting her hand out as she listened for that "Nell, Nell," which she never answered. Nell as she taunted him over her shoulder. Nell as she glared at him in that fierce burst of indignation. Nell as she passed away down the shaded foot-path out of his sight.

On and on he drew far into the night, adding touch after touch to satisfy his remembrance. And then as the clock struck two he gathered together all the Eleanors and Nells into one packet, and locked them up in his desk before going out for a last breath of air.

When Friday came, Mrs. Calthwaite and her daughter duly called at The Abbey and Mary received them with all politeness.

Mrs. Calthwaite was generally a little shy when first meeting an acquaintance, but Mary soon set her at her ease and helped

her with her quick, nervous sentences, for the shyer Mrs. Calthwaite was, the faster she talked.

Mary rather liked Miss Calthwaite. She was always interested in dull people, having a curious desire to probe the dulness, to find the living, burning, quivering reality beneath.

Sometimes she succeeded in her research, but sometimes she failed altogether, for the simple reason that there are souls who really seem to be all surface—even, pleasant, irreproachable surface it may be—but more generally dull, dreary, desert surface, on which neither storm, glaring sunshine, nor stifling heat take any effect. It remains desert still.

But Miss Calthwaite's dulness was hardly of either of these kinds. Beneath the surface of her life lay precious metal, awaiting either the hand of the seeker or a volcanic rupture, to bring it to view.

Eleanor showed off well. She was always particularly sweet to elderly ladies, and Mrs. Calthwaite was charmed with her freshness and simplicity. She moved about and talked with a new brightness and a subdued excitement to which Mary greatly feared she had received the key a few days before.

However, there is nothing like strict conventionality for helping awkward situations, and though Mary could not endure the son, it was impossible to be otherwise than pleasant and civil to his mother and sister.

When the callers left Eleanor slipped away for a ramble up on to the Castle Hill, a spot to which she had already introduced herself, and soon afterwards the door opened and Catherine came cautiously in.

"Ah, Mary—alone! What a blessing! Where is the infant?"

"Off for a ramble. Now have you come in for a nice gossip? I am dying to talk to you. Ring for some fresh tea. Now do, dear!"

"Oh no, I can't stay." Catherine invariably said she could not stay before an hour's visitation, and the least question or movement on the part of Mary would set her on the move.

Even the entrance of the harmless Jacobs would suggest to her leavetaking and she would rise like a butterfly from a petal. So Mary, desiring her presence, dropped the subject of fresh tea and endured seeing her sister-in-law partake of the cool, limp beverage.

"This will do perfectly, I've had two teas already this afternoon, and I only want a single cup, I'm expecting Harry any moment. I told him to come and fetch me."

Catherine came up to the low table to pour out for herself. "Whom have you had?" she remarked, as she noticed the empty cups and the disarranged chairs.

"Only Mrs. and Miss Calthwaite."

"Ah, then I suppose you were right and the 'Duke' is nibbling?"

The Duke happened to be the name given locally to Calthwaite, in compliment no doubt to his graceful manners and lordly attitude towards his Farbiggin acquaintances.

Mary smiled and shook her head.

"Oh, come, Mary, you said you wanted to talk a little gossip, there is nothing like a little right down good gossip for cheering one up. Besides, I came to make you tell me how you are really getting on, I never can catch you alone now!"

Mary loved a chat with her sister-in-law. Catherine was very erratic in her visitations; sometimes she dropped in daily for a week, at others she never came near for a month or so; she meant no offence, and Mary had quite ceased taking any. But when she did come, there was no one to whom Mary would rather unburden her mind of a good many little matters that oppressed her.

"Well, I am getting on very well indeed. Far better than I expected. She really is a charming girl. No, Catherine, you need not make that face, she really is quite charming and most affectionate, and as far as I can see simple and unaffected."

"Oh, well, all I can say is 'Beware!' I noticed her after you had left on Tuesday, and I must confess I came to the conclusion that she was a barefaced little flirt!"

But Mary was sturdily truthful and loyal and would not allow Catherine to insinuate evil unchecked.

"No, honestly, I somehow think you are wrong. Of course I can't say, but I do know that I loathe Arthur Calthwaite. I do really. It may be shocking, but the fact remains!"

"Well, mark my words, she was taken with him. Not that I know much about these things."

"You! And you have been flirting with the same man ever since you were eighteen!"

"Well, but Mary, now suppose that he really came forward as a suitor, would you object? Do let us do a little match-making. I am yearning to get some practice before Maud starts these vagaries."

"That would be father's affair, I suppose. I only hope nothing will come to a head before she is one-and-twenty, and then she can do exactly as she likes."

"What delicious cake! What is it?"

"Only some German Kuchen that Eleanor persuaded me to let her make. All the domestics are in love with her. She wanders about entirely at her ease and makes friends with every man, woman and boy and animal about the place. Even our small groom is her devoted slave and is coming out quite wonderfully under her influence, and as for Vixen she has gone over to her body and soul, or ears and tail if you prefer it. Look, there they are!" and from the window they could just see the slight figure in white climbing up the steep hillside, and the collie bounding along in front.

"Dear me!" remarked Catherine, taking a second piece of Kuchen, "then what about Ryder?"

"My dear Catherine, don't!"

"All right then, I won't! Ask me no questions and I'll—we know the rest of the saying."

"There's only one thing, Catherine, I know you always go to those Tennis Thursdays at Calthwaite. I wonder if you would mind escorting Eleanor? You would be an angel! They were so very pressing this afternoon."

"Ah! the plot thickens! It's all very well for you to

throw her on to me! How am I to look after her, please? Why, I don't suppose she can play tennis either. Bad players are at a discount. Calthwaite takes good care not to allow the second rates to get much of a chance. I often wonder they come."

"She seems to have had some practice, but I imagine she plays a poor game. I made Ryder give her a lesson yesterday, and I heard great chatterings going on, and when she came in she told me she was simply "frantically bad."

"There, you see! And how am I to look after her amongst all that tribe of ne'er-do-weels that loaf round at Calthwaite on a Tennis Thursday?"

"Catherine!"

"Oh, I know that the men are not quite all rubbish—happily for Farbiggin not quite all! But the main of them are fools—back-boneless fools, waiting for something to turn up either in their worldly affairs or their brains! Do you know, Mary, I feel inclined to go on the ramp when I consider the average, nowadays, young man!

"You even mock at Ryder I have noticed."

"Of course I do, but that is only for his good! But I don't mean boys like Ryder. Why, he is head and shoulders above these cubs that meditate on themselves and their cigars at the club—these men who discuss the girls and talk mannish (I won't say womanish) gossip, and lie in bed in the morning as some of those young doctors do, and struggle through two hours' work in a day at their sleepy offices and banks, or pottering round their estates. Oh, I should dearly love to fire some of them out!"

"Where?"

"Oh, anywhere, I don't mind. Somewhere where there were no cigars at any rate. What makes me so mad is that they seem actually proud of their ignorance and imbecility! In fact they consider downright gross ignorance as a sign of culture."

"Go on, Catherine, I love to hear you rage," and Mary leant back with enjoyment written on her face.

"Oh, I can go on any amount. I know I'm woefully ignorant. No one could live with Harry and not know that, but I hope I don't pride myself thereon!"

"I rather agree, but do you know I sometimes feel so sorry about it. I hate to think of young manhood sinking down to the contemplation of cigars, gossip, whisky and soda, or even games!"

"I'm not a scrap sorry. They all want a right down good shaking. What have they grown up for but to take the world's burden upon them? That is, if they *are* grown up, which I sometimes seriously doubt. Some men are nothing but great babies—weak, fractious babies."

"If they were only babies and nothing worse, one would not be so fearful, but seriously, Catherine, I think you might be a little kinder to Teddie. You are rather too snubbing. Do you know, I believe you hurt him sometimes!"

"Do I, poor darling boy! Well, I'll make an enormous fuss over his next project, if you can warn me what it is going to be. Ryder is such a queer boy; he is so awfully in earnest and looks so solemn and deduces such soul-appalling theories that he makes me laugh. I can't help it, it must be as Topsy says: ''Cos I'se so wicked'; my mind riots with merriment when he gets on to one of his gee-gees!"

"Catherine in full swing!" said the Vicar quietly as he entered the room. "How are you, Mary?"

"Enjoying your wife. She is a delightful woman, Henry!"

"She is! I've thought the same for a long time."

"Don't be silly, Harry. Now what do you think is the latest?"

"No conception."

"Well, Mary here wants me to undertake Eleanor—to chaperone her to Calthwaite—and no one knows where else besides."

"I see that you are bursting with pride at your office, dear."

"Harry! Oh, well, I shall have to stop playing tennis now. That is what it means. I always knew a time would come when age would set me free, and now the time has come. I

can't have the face to stand up in a tennis court, if I am taking a girl of twenty about."

"I don't know what the players will say when they have to make up for the next matches. I am sure you look as young as any of them."

"Now, Harry, you will soon be making me look positively ridiculous if you go on with that age delusion of yours. It will have to vanish at last."

"Suppose you go on playing tennis and I do the chaperoning?"

"Oh, I daresay. No, Mary, I will not let you through. I will stick to my post, and play the old woman at last. Come along, Harry."

"Oh, can't you stay? I never see Henry!"

"No, really we can't! This is the very last moment. The Vicarage will be in an uproar as it is. Do come, Harry! What a dawdle you are!" and she dragged him away.

As the discordant bells rang out for six o'clock to the tune of "Home, Sweet Home," a lovely picture might have been seen up in the Castle yard. But there was no one to see it—none but the twittering birds and the cawing rooks and the merry little gnats that danced their summer dance in their own misty clouds. It was only a girl in white seated on a fallen block of old-century masonry, with a sable collie at her feet. The simple straw hat was lying on her knee, and the only colouring in the picture was the grey stone, the green, grassy background, the golden hair, and the sable collie with her nose resting on her companion's lap

Eleanor was taking her fill of the old Castle. She had climbed the hill, and watched the evening shadows moving majestically over the wild distances. She had gazed far to the south, if perchance she might catch a glimpse of the shining sea, and straight in front of her she had amused herself with tracing out the streets and roads and river-windings beneath, and up the opposite hillside, the grey mass of the Scarth, the stony fell lands which stretched mile on mile above the thin drifting smoke of the town. She felt a

feeling of Germany as she admired the June foliage of the great trees which clung round the walls of the old ruin, leaving their roots exposed in serpentine tracery on the earthy bank, and she delighted in the ancient moat in which there were now only a few grassy pools of water, telling of a time of past warfare and victory.

Eleanor only thought of victory in the life before her. She was very happy. Life was far pleasanter than she had imagined. People were nicer than she had expected. How clear the sky was between the great massy clouds, how strong and free the air, how refreshing the evening atmosphere!

"You dear, darling Vixen!" she said, stooping down, and taking the dog's face between her hands and looking down into the soft, brown eyes. "Dear Vixen! you and I will tell each other secrets some times, shall we? But I have no secret to-night. Nothing at all to tell you! Come, my sweet!"

Vixen moved the tip of her long, bushy tail sympathetically, and then Eleanor rose, and the dog bounded forward dancing along in front of her, back to The Abbey.

CHAPTER XXVI

At this time life seemed determined to shower down upon Eleanor in hearty profusion those things which are generally supposed to bring true happiness. She was certainly happy—happy in the sense that old unhappinesses slumbered and new ones had not arisen to cloud the horizon.

She had a pleasant home and ample allowance, peaceful hours for reading, time for the beloved music. She drove with Mary, and paid calls with Catherine, and chattered to Mary in her free, musical German when they were alone. She made friends easily, and having received nothing but kindness all her life in Germany, she took kindly feeling for granted, and brought a breath of wholesome *naïveté* into the social life of the old town.

Of course she was discussed in every detail, but she was in the main unconscious of the discussion; and Mary was not the one to introduce her to all the petty absurdities of Farbiggin social politics.

It was true that a new excitement had entered into her life, whether deeper than excitement it would be hard to say, but certainly when shopping or driving or riding she could not keep herself from looking expectantly for a certain interesting form.

Were she rewarded with the vision she desired—with a smile or a polite bow—she returned home satisfied; and she would confide to Vixen the important fact that she had had an adventure. If she were not so rewarded, then Vixen received a tender caress, and her alert ears would hear a laughing whisper, "No adventures to-day, dear, darling Vixen. Never mind, we don't care, do we?"

Eleanor took Ryder as a matter of course, and as part of the establishment.

She was very soon installed as coffee-maker at the breakfast-table, and she quickly learnt to wait on Mr. Glyn with a certain pretty, deferential courtesy, and gradually the habit grew of taking him round the garden and seeing him off for his early morning ride, which he always took in good weather before going to his office.

Ryder began to look forward to the breakfast hour. He could not remember the time since his schoolroom days when a woman had served his morning coffee. He had seriously grudged turning the meal into one for conventional chitchat, for he and his father had usually eaten silently, each absorbed in his respective newspaper.

But as the days passed, Ryder found himself enjoying the quick, effective movements, the dainty ways of the girl; and while Mr. Glyn still read his paper, Ryder gradually dropped his polite nothings, and broke out on all manner of topics in which he was interested. And Eleanor followed the arguments with a serious face, and whilst putting in quaint and entirely original questions, and extremely un-

answerable objections, showed woeful ignorance and very shrewd intuition.

And he, forgetting to entertain, entertained right wondrously, and filled Eleanor's mind with so many new ideas and fresh interests that had she been of an introspective nature she would hardly have credited the difference which this new intercourse was introducing into her outlook in life.

It was evident, that if Eleanor were to take her place properly amongst the athletically inclined Moorshire young people, she must be able to play tennis.

It was quite evident also, that the little practice she had had at Weimar, was worthless; but by dint of energetic hard work at the Vicarage, and singles with Ryder, she improved rapidly.

When the question of going to Calthwaite was discussed, Eleanor objected to going until, as she expressed it, she could get a ball over the net decently.

When Ryder had offered to teach her she acquiesced eagerly, and he, taking the matter in hand seriously, not only instructed, but insisted that his instructions should be carried out.

"You know, Miss Carradus," he said earnestly one bright afternoon, "it is not the least use my telling you not to do certain things if you will go on doing them the moment after I have spoken!"

But Eleanor only laughed merrily; and when he insisted still further she pouted; and when he, quite unconscious that he was giving offence, made some further suggestion, she grew tired of the business, and, throwing her racket down on the ground, refused to go on.

Ryder looked at her with astonished wonder written large on his face, and there was an awkward pause.

Eleanor stood looking at him across the net. She had thrown her hat aside long before, and now her racket lay in disgrace on the ground.

"Oh, if you are tired, Miss Carradus! I am sorry I did not know——"

"Oh, I'm not tired! I am just mad. I don't know if it is with myself or the ball, or with you, or what!"

"Well, let us stop, then!" and he walked forward.

Eleanor still stood in the back court, flushed and irritated. She watched him let down the net, and come slowly towards the tell-tale racket.

"No! you shan't pick it up!" and she sprang forward. "I'm a pig! I always was, you know—never mind; but somehow I feel to you as I used to feel sometimes to my old music professor. I could have killed him!"

Ryder could not help smiling. "I'm awfully sorry, Miss Carradus. Could you do anything to me now that would be a relief to you?"

"Nothing, I am afraid. No, there's nothing to do; nothing but to bear with me. I shall come round in time. Kätchen always used to leave me on these occasions. Oh, of course, you don't know Kätchen."

"No, I'm sorry. Was she a wise person?"

"Now you are laughing at me—yes, you are—and it's a shame, for you can't imagine how annoying it is to feel you are doing a thing wretchedly and stupidly!"

"Don't I? I am afraid you hardly know me very well yet."

"Well, you don't look as if you could lose your self-possession. You have such a supremely steady-going kind of appearance."

Ryder laughed. "Well, ask Mary some time, and she will tell you home truths, and meanwhile you might as well sit down;" and he led the way to a couple of lounge chairs under an overspreading copper beech-tree.

Eleanor placed herself comfortably, and began fanning her hot face with her hat.

"Why don't you smoke, Mr. Ryder?"

"I never do."

"I know that. But why?"

"Well, you see, I am about among so many young boys, and I see young fellows ruining their brains and their prospects

in life through smoking, so I don't feel it worth while for them to see me do it. Besides, I have my own brains to consider."

"I see. Well, I know heaps of awfully nice people that smoke."

"Oh, so do I."

"And people with brains too."

"Yes, I know."

"Then I think you are ridiculous."

"Do you?" and Ryder's mouth had great difficulty in keeping its gravity. "I'm sorry."

"Do you honestly think that I shall ever play tennis—decently, I mean?"

"Yes, I think you will. You were coming on nicely at first, I thought, this afternoon."

"I wasn't."

"You have some nice strokes and you have a good style and judgment, but you are too impetuous; you run too much at the ball, and you don't work your wrist enough. But I have seen lots of girls worse than you, and you exert yourself and run about, and that is a great thing."

"I didn't exert myself much to-day."

"No, I noticed that. I am afraid I am rather a stupid teacher."

"Oh no, you are all right; but I hate to learn—that is all. You destroy my self-complaisancy."

They were interrupted by the appearance of Johnson, who came up and touched his hat.

"Mr. Ryder, sir, the horse is come, sir. I've told the master, sir, and he says as perhaps Miss Carradus would like to see him, sir."

Eleanor leaped to her feet.

"My horse! Oh, how lovely! I didn't know he was coming this afternoon!" And she left her companion without ceremony and hurried off down the path into the stableyard.

Mr. Glyn was already there looking, with the eye of an

expert, at the beautiful animal which a stranger groom was holding.

"Come along, Miss Carradus. Here he is, ready to carry you 'over the hills and far away' any time!" and Mr. Glyn stooped to stroke down the glossy forelegs.

Eleanor came up, and put out her hand and pulled the mane through her fingers.

"Oh, what a beauty! Oh, I don't know what he is!"

"Quite guaranteed for a lady, miss," said Johnson admiringly. "Mr. Ryder, sir, try him, and let the young lady see his paces."

There was quite a little crowd assembled to see the new excitement. Gardeners from the glasshouses near, servants standing at the kitchen door, and even the solemn Jacobs could be soon looking over the courtyard from his pantry window.

Ryder gathered the reins together, leapt easily into the saddle, and trotted off down the drive and into the paddock.

"He's lovely—lovely!" cried Eleanor. "Oh, Mr. Glyn, do you really mean that I am to ride him? Really and truly?"

Mr. Glyn looked at the girl and smiled in a fatherly manner. "Yes, dear child, really and truly. We must make you into the best horsewoman in Moorshire. Well, what's the report, Ryder?" as his son presently returned.

"First class, father; you could not have done better, so far as I am a judge; easy paces, and a delightful mouth."

"A hundred golden guineas, Miss Carradus! I hope you do not think that shocking!" said her guardian; "but I don't believe in second-class horseflesh." And Mr. Glyn looked at the new purchase with positive affection.

"I am afraid I don't know anything at all about it, Mr. Glyn. I think he is altogether perfect, and if you think it is all right, of course it is all right."

"Well, you will have to begin your riding lessons at once. Johnson here will put you into the way of things, and my son Ryder will be glad to help, I am sure."

"I am afraid I am useless as a teacher, father;" and Ryder

looked down at Eleanor quizzically. "I have a knack of making my instructions offensive in some way."

But Eleanor's testiness had fled away at sight of the new treasure, for her tantrums were very short-lived, so she was quite able to remark to her guardian: "Mr. Ryder and I have been quarrelling over tennis, but I hope I should behave better on horseback. The fear of falling off will perhaps keep me in order."

"I think that Johnson should be the regular morning coach, and that you, Ryder, had better be the examiner or head-master when you are at liberty, and there is no doubt that I shall put in a word myself; so, Miss Eleanor, you will have no chance of getting into bad habits."

Ryder laughed. "Of course I shall be delighted to give all the coaching I possibly can."

"And of course I shall be awfully, awfully good, sir!" and Eleanor made him a little mocking courtesy.

Eleanor soon learnt to ride. Any bliss she had experienced heretofore sank into nothingness before this new rapture.

She could have lived in the saddle. She even dreamed of riding at night, and Ryder had nothing to complain of in the way in which she obeyed his slighest direction. Her pride was immense when Mr. Glyn himself suggested that she should join him in his early rides.

After that, many and many a breakfast-time Eleanor appeared in her well-cut habit, and it seemed as though, charming as she looked in her laces and summer flummeries, she looked even more lovely in collar, shirt, and dark-green habit cloth.

Mary now and then came to her window, and looked down at her father and guest as they rode off on the sweet summer mornings, and a sigh would escape from that patient heart, and a tear would struggle up into those brave, loving eyes.

It was some years ago since Mary's old "Prince Rupert" had been shot, and many more since she and he together, had laughed at the mile stones, and met the wind in full career on the wide, open fells.

The parting with the old horse was one of the things that Mary could never quite bear to remember. He had been so connected with the life of long ago. He was gone, and she was left. So as guardian and ward rode off Mary would slip back to her morning rest, and the old tragedy of "Never Again" would fill her throat and quiver her nerves, and not all her self-consoling arguments could quite remove the pain.

Eleanor at last decided that she played tennis sufficiently well to make a modest appearance at the Calthwaite Tennis Thursdays, and started off in high spirits with Catherine. Catherine tried to keep an eye upon her, but she was in great request for tennis, and was dragged off to a hot double just when she saw Calthwaite standing at ease near Eleanor, with the evident intention of asking her to take a stroll; for it was quite one of the things to do at Calthwaite, to walk the grounds and admire the glass houses, which were the most wonderful in the county except for Sir William Temple's.

When Catherine looked round after her first service they had disappeared. And the very next day Catherine came to relieve her mind to Mary.

"Of course, Mary, I don't know if anything happened. His attentions were certainly pointed, but they all worried me so awfully to play that——"

"That you played!"

"Yes, I played. I know I'm a hopeless chaperone."

"Was there a good muster?"

"Oh, yes, there were heaps and heaps—a regular turn-out. I wonder how Mrs. Calthwaite manages week after week, but the Duke, I imagine, likes her to keep up the hospitalities. It is part of their position, you know! Sir Matthew Preston was there and his wife and a tribe of sickly-looking children. Now that man is another I can't stand!"

"Catherine!"

"Mary! You can't stand him yourself, for all he is quite the handsomest man in Moorshire. Oh, I know one can't deny that!"

"I suppose you had rain?"

"Just a shower, and we all rushed indoors. That child of yours played marvellously. She will make Moorshire musical experts who think the knowledge of music lives and dies with themselves 'sit up,' to use one of Rob's expressions. You should have seen Eleanor's face when some of the people were performing. Miss Le Fevre, for instance, with that piece of Grieg that she plays every time she sits at the piano as far as I have ever discovered. Eleanor set her face very solemnly, but you could see that the expression was quite artificial, and when she looked up to join in the 'Thank you' the smile broke out from her mouth. Oh, I saw it, the little hypocrite!"

"I suppose you thanked, Catherine?"

"Oh, yes, but I never smiled!"

And meanwhile the little "hypocrite" was letting off her surplus energies in a long epistle to Kätchen, whom she felt she had been somewhat neglecting.

"THE ABBEY, FARBIGGIN.

"*July.*

"DEAREST CHILD,—Oh, dear! where shall I begin. I want to tell you everything, and that is quite impossible Well, first of all, how are you all and the beloved Weimar? People are, I suppose, getting hotter and hotter and crosser and crosser; fingers sliding helplessly on the wet piano keys, and ices sliding deliciously down throats. I am progressing wonderfully, and there always seems to be a good deal going on.

"I wrote you all about the Whitsuntide outing; well, now I want to describe a regular Moorshire tennis party. Of course I can't tell you it properly, but you may gather some facts and a few ideas after you have laboured through these pages.

"The party was at a place called Calthwaite. Calthwaite is quite the ugliest house I have seen for some time. It is built of square cut stone blocks, in shape as plain and square and flat as you can imagine. No gables, not a vestige of an

outstanding window, and the grey-blue slate roof is as dull and shallow as those we used to draw in the Schule when no one but our next-door neighbour was looking It seemed as if all the cost of the ornament had been put into the cutting of those limestone blocks and the great, staring, high plate-glass windows.

"However, the inside is most luxurious; really the place is quite filled with carpets and curtains, mats and pictures, tables and vases, and the air was thick with scent of flowers, quite overpowering. A shower of rain came on while we were there, so everybody wandered about indoors, and Mr. Calthwaite showed me his own room. I call it shocking for a man to have such a boudoir, but it was very jolly all the same. He had heaps of sketches about, but nothing seemed quite finished. And this is very private: he showed me one he had done of me at Ottarthwaite. Oh! and wonder of wonders, they had quite a decent piano (oh, the pianos I have laboured on since I came here!), and while every one crowded in from the rain they made me play, and I felt quite professional. It was rather a comfort to show them that I could do something, for I had just made a dreadful exhibition of myself at tennis. If my partner, Mr. Calthwaite, had not had the temper of an angel he would have thrown up the game.

"Talking of tennis, Mrs. Glyn, the Vicar's wife, plays marvellously. It would amuse you to see her husband, the grave, quiet Vicar, watching her every stroke with adoring admiration. She is quite the best lady player, and they all want her continuously, and so I really saw very little of her, though she was supposed to be taking care of me!

"Oh, yes, and Kätchen, darling, I saw the handsomest man I think I have ever seen—no, don't think things, my dear, he is married and has a wife and lots of children, who trailed behind their mother all the afternoon. Sir Matthew Preston is very tall, dark, with wavy black hair, not a sign of grey that I could see, and large dark eyes; but what struck me most was his straightness and his pose. He kept looking at me, and I believe I know why, and I am certain he asked some one

who I was. I hope he was edified with what he heard. I don't suppose I really ought to tell you, but I hate Sir Matthew Preston. I can just guess why my darling mother would never marry him, and though you know I don't pretend to adore my Whinery grandparents, still it hurts me somehow to think that this man helped on the ruin. Do you know while I was sitting on a low seat watching Catherine playing I heard some one the other side of the tree saying, with a mocking kind of laugh, 'There goes Sir Matthew; a jolly thing he made out of the Whinery affairs by all accounts.' Wasn't that disgusting?

"I had quite a nice talk with Miss Calthwaite. She is the only daughter, and can't be said to be afflicted with good looks, but she amused me rather. She made such quaint remarks about the people.

"You should see some of the athletic girls and the untidy, tennisy men! They play as if they were boys and girls at school—quite old ones too.

"But where was I? Oh! Miss Calthwaite. Well, she tells me that every spring they have a Musical Festival, and she is sure that I ought to be made use of and train a choir or conduct a village orchestra or something. It would be fun, of course, but we shall see. Apparently there is difficulty in finding conductors.

"As for piano playing in Moorshire, I suppose I heard the best amateurs they have in the district, and it really was appalling. A girl played one of the simpler Chopin waltzes with the trills and dear little baby runs left out; and another played a frantic Grieg—played it like an electric barrel organ, and with just about as much soul; and another rather solemn-faced lady sat down to a delightful Chopin étude with a look on her face as much as to say, 'Now, you frivolous people, prepare for solemnification.' Whereupon she played so slowly—oh, so awfully slowly, but without a scrap of tone—as if slowness of itself produced solemnity, until all impressiveness was lost between the notes. I seemed to feel dear Herr Professor in the room and to hear him in his panting ejacula-

tion, 'Falsche sentimentalität! Himmel! she plays like an exhausted elephant!' Well, never mind, I only trust I shan't get conceited, for they evidently think I am quite a marvel! I was treated with the most deferential consideration. Fancy, poor little me!

"And oh, Kätchen, I have got a horse, and I am crazy—crazy! I have called him Graf, and we go for lovely rides. By we I mean my guardian, and sometimes the son. But the son is often busy. He, being the junior partner, has, I suppose, most of the work to do.

"That boy is improving. I don't think that at the bottom he is quite so conceited as I thought. He is very kind and good-natured, and does not mind what trouble he takes when he remembers; but he is absurdly absent-minded, and so frantically in earnest. However, we don't quarrel quite as much as I expected we should. I have a flare-out now and again. You see I don't choose to flare-out with Miss Glyn, and I dare not with Mr. Glyn, so he is my only outlet for a refreshing little row.

"Now goodbye, my dearest, with love—love—love to you and dear Frau von Hervart, and kindest remembrances to your honoured father. Ever yours,

"HELENCHEN."

To this letter Kätchen wasted the foreign postage on the following reply:—

"LIEBES HELENCHEN,—

"Aber wie alt ist dieser Herr Calthwaite?

"KÄTCHEN."

CHAPTER XXVII

"EH, Nell, I is tired!" and Sarah Jameson pushed her arm into Nell's as they walked up the street.

Both girls looked hot and fagged. Whilst Eleanor was playing tennis, or riding in the cool summer mornings, or

resting indoors during the heat, or listening to the cool splash of the waves on the North Wales coast, the factory workers were still pursuing their dull round. Hour after hour the girls toiled; well or ill they stood for ten long hours every day, growing, as the summer advanced, white, anæmic, and listless. Even in the tobacco shops, where spirits were high and jokes were, as a rule, plentiful, wit flagged, and the clock was watched with a wistful intensity.

As July broke into August, family after family left the little town for the fresh sea breezes, the mountain heights, or the changeful Continent. The pulpits were short of preachers, the Sunday schools of teachers, and even the doctors had deserted and left young, inexperienced *locums* to depress the situation still further. But the early morning clatter of the clogs down the Scarth continued remorselessly, and the smell of the tobacco shop was as strong as ever, and the demand for cigars and cigarettes amongst the loungers in the refreshing holiday resorts continued unabated.

So the girls worked steadily without enthusiasm, and saturated their hot, damp clothes and enervated lungs with the odour of the "fragrant weed," whilst the dainty boxes of their produce were piled day by day into the huge cases, which were carried off to the station.

So Sarah Jameson admitted that she was tired, but Nell admitted nothing; she only expressed the opinion that "T' warld was turbel badly manished."

It was a specially breathless summer. The fell lands were burnt brown, and the fine limestone dust settled everywhere with a persistent whiteness. The river had dwindled to a mere trickle, in which the indefatigable youngsters floundered in broad daylight, and the police for once had not the heart to stop them. And whilst the river-bed threw the scent of its refuse back into the hot air, the sanitary inspector was away with his wife and family by the breezy coast.

The Water Company with creditable economy withdrew the water supply for the greater part of the day, and up and down the town the unflushed drains and gutters, and piled up

midden steads, sent out their evil smell through many a lane and alley, through many a kitchen and bedroom.

And at night on the Scarth, the people at last remembered the repeated instructions of Dr. Maddison, and gasping for breath they made for the windows to let in the fresh air, but generally they found a casement a few inches square, the only medium through which they could let in even an apology for this necessary of life.

Some of the windows had not even the tiny casement, but were hermetically sealed. Yet such is the tenacity with which the human kind holds its life, that even in such rooms the restless, half-stifled slumberers lived till morning.

But the tide of health sank lower, and nerves and tempers mustered strength, and many a baby slept its last long sleep, and in Dicky, at any rate, life began to flicker very perceptibly.

"Eye! I'se tired," repeated Sarah.

"Well, thoo's finished for to-day, any road!" Nell replied cheeringly. "I wish thoo hed a lad, Sarah, and then thoo could gaa walking oot; it would do tha good!"

Sarah laughed in spite of herself. "Naá, Nell, I'se leave t' lads to thee. Which on em is it to-neet?"

"Dicky. Eh, Sally, yon lile lad, he fair meks ma creep!"

"Thoo's aulus wi Dicky; what does Jack Fleming say to tha'?"

"He can say anything he hes a mind; let him tak oop wi thee, I'se thrang!"

Sarah turned away, there was no such interest for her. Nell was a puzzle to Sarah. It seemed so odd that she should persistently despise a young man who was so steady, so "religious," just exactly the kind of man whom Sarah was waiting for herself.

So Nell turned off home and freshened herself up, cheered the children and rated her mother, and then went out to see Dicky. He was in the little kitchen, a fire was burning hotly and cooking was progressing. Several neighbours were in the room keeping company with Mrs. Dixon, who was busy with the frying-pan, and her husband was seated in stocking feet

in the rocking-chair in the corner, between Dicky's bed and the fire.

The boy was lying by the window on an improvised bed, and his face lighted up with a brave, wan smile as Nell entered.

"Nell, darlin'!"

"He's turbel set on yon lass!" said his mother in a loud whisper to old Betsy, who had come in for a good sit.

"Well, Dicky!"

A faint freshness seemed to come in with Nell, possibly due to the force of her bright young strength, or to the roses she carried in her hand.

"I'se tired, Nell!"

"Of course thoo is, my lad. Niver heed, smell them roses I'se fetched for tha!" The boy stretched out his feeble hand for the flowers.

"Look! he's joost skin and bone!" remarked his mother again in her loud undertone.

The flies had found Dicky; all day and all night they settled upon him: on his forehead, his cheeks, his mouth, his neck, and his slender hands and wrists. Fly papers, fly catchers, all resulted in failure, and when there was no one at leisure to brush them away, he had learnt to endure like a drummer-boy on a battlefield. Nell took out a spotless handkerchief.

"Watter, Mrs. Dixon?"

"Theer's none in t' tap, but I saved some in yon tub."

"I'd like to shut some o' them Water Company directors up on t' Scarth for a week or two!" growled the man in the corner. "Not a drop o' clean watter, and some on em gettin' oop teetotal meetin's!"

Dixon did not expect to be listened to, but he clenched his hand savagely, and again buried himself in his evening paper.

Nell spread the cool wet cloth over the boy's forehead, and the neighbours seated on high chairs round the room looked on. When Nell had straightened the bed and smoothed the cotton sheet and brushed Dicky's hair (all the merry little curls now soft and limp with perspiration), she turned and looked round the room.

"There's ouer many folk in this spot!" she said abruptly. Then, regardless of the scornful and indignant glances that went from one to the other, she continued: "Mrs. Dixon, you should stick to t' doctor's orders. You've no call to hev sa many folk round. If we a' hev to hev lile rooms we've no call to tek a' t' air as there is fra a lad what's dyin'! You dursent hev hed a' this lot here if t' doctor hed a' bin i' Farbiggin!"

A woman rose. "Well, Nell Carradus, it's time folk left when such as thee teks to larnin' folk."

And in another moment old Betsy also rose indignant.

"Well I'se blessed!—well I is fer sure! Naá', thoo'l nut stop ma, Mrs. Dixen. Good-neet. It's a good job to larn when folk' room is better nor folk' company."

But a pale young woman sitting near the door plucked up courage to say, "Naá happen she's reet. She said joost t' saám afore we buried oor lile Maggie."

Nell said nothing, but sat down on the chair and brushed away the flies industriously. The women rose one by one and left the room, and then a half-smile rose to her face.

But Mrs. Dixon whispered, "Eh, Nell Carradus, what a tongue thoo hes! It 'ull be a' ower t' Scarth as I wadn't be civil."

"Let it be," grumped her husband from his corner.

"Niver heed, Mrs. Dixon," said Nell cheerfully, for she had carried the point; "naábody 'ull blaám thee. Any road, we'se shot on 'em. Now, Dicky, we'se hev a good sing."

Dicky smiled, and pulled from off the window-ledge a worn Sunday-school hymn-book.

"He reads t' hymns tull hissell a deal, doesn't he, father?"

The man nodded his head slowly, and looked into the fire.

Clearly and softly Nell sang, subduing her rich voice to the size of the room, and the strength of the child.

And Dicky lay quietly looking at her, and his eyes grew peaceful, and the anxious puckers round his mouth smoothed themselves away.

"Gaa on, Nell," he said at the close of each hymn, and never had prima donna a sweeter encore. So Nell sang on and on,

until gradually the eyes, grown unnaturally large with the shrinkage of the worn face, closed, and he slept.

"T' first sleep he's getten to-day," said his mother with a look of gratitude in her face. "Eh, deary me, them flies!"

So Nell came in night after night, and on Saturdays and Sundays through the August days, spending many an hour in that hot little room.

On the Scarth it became known that when Nell Carradus was at Mrs. Dixon's they had best keep away, and many a visitor before venturing across the threshold would look round the door with the query, "Is she theer?"

Sometimes Dicky talked, and sometimes he was strangely silent.

Nell found herself becoming interested in Dicky's state, not only for his poor wan little self, but because he was a representative of that thing called Death—the prophet of the future existence. She found that Dicky absolutely took the future life for granted. He talked of heaven as if he knew his way up and down the golden streets. He told her what Jesus said to him, and what he said in reply. He seemed familiar and quite unabashed at the thought of angels, and looked forward to seeing John Carradus and other Scarth acquaintances with absolute faith.

Nell would have died rather than cast a doubt into Dicky's mind. She sang all the hymns he loved over and over again with loving patience, and imperceptibly she became herself influenced by the Divine presence which Dicky accepted as a matter of fact.

"Jesus was here last night, Nell!"

"Was He, my lad?"

"Eye, He was so! He put His hand reet doon under my bones!" and Dicky moved feebly.

Poor Dicky's body was reduced to "bones" now, though thanks to Nell's dogged, resolute care he was spared the agony of bed sores, the general accompaniment of long, serious illness on the Scarth.

"And did He speak to tha?" asked Nell curiously.

"Why eye! I exed Him to tek ma quick. I telt Him I was thirsty, and wanted to drink of the Fountain of Life. Sing it, Nell!"

And Nell sang the old refrain.

"The Fountain of Life is flowing,
Flowing, freely flowing,
The Fountain of Life is flowing,
Is flowing for you and for me."

"A sup, Nell."

Dicky was always thirsty now. He never could drink enough to satisfy his feverish throat.

Nell raised the soda-and-milk to the dry lips.

"Thank tha. Eye, Nell, and He telt me He was comin' for ma soon, and then I exed Him joost to let me bide while Miss Mary got back."

"She's comin' back t' next week. They were saying so at t' Sunday School."

"Then thoo'll fetch her. Be sure and fetch her. I wadn't keep her a minute."

Nell did not imagine for a moment that Miss Glyn would be able to come, for she knew that she could not possibly ascend the steep roadway up to the cottage, but she could not bear to disappoint the child.

"And there's Dr. Maddison, I wad like to hev sin him afore I set off."

Nell wished so, too. But the doctor was away in the north of Scotland enjoying a well-earned holiday on the golf links.

As soon as Mary was known to be at The Abbey, Nell called, in response to Dicky's urgent entreaty.

It was Sunday afternoon, and Mary was alone.

"I came, Miss Mary, but it's no good."

"What is it, dear?"

"Nobbut Dicky—he's nearly finished, and he was wantin' you to come and see him—I was forced to come. I dursn't tell him as you couldn't."

Mary was silent.

"You can't Miss Mary—oh, I know you can't—only—" and

Nell struggled to steady her voice—"only, Miss Mary, t' lile feller, he wanted you so bad."

Mary pressed her hand to her brow. She had one of her racking headaches upon her.

"No, Nell. I can't—I can't indeed."

"Oh, I know as you can't! But he hed summut he wanted to say to you, and besides, he wanted you to pray wi' him. He niver exes me to pray. He knows weel enough I can't. Them curates comes, but they can't make no prayers neither. They nobbut read 'em out of a lile book, and that's nowt."

Mary could not help smiling, and then she made Nell tell her all about the illness.

"Poor Dicky! And we have all been away enjoying ourselves, and you have been so hard at work!"

"Oh, work does me no hurt," said Nell independently, "but——" and she looked round the large, airy room. "Nobbut it's t' lile 'uns as I bother ower. Eh, if I hed t' Scarth houses as some one as I kna hes! I'd hev t' maist on 'em smashed oop—eh, I wad. T' nasty filthy spots—and yon Wild Boar public, I'd set it o' fire, and team it awn spirit ower it to help t' blaze. It burns wi' hell fire a'ready does yon spot."

"I believe you are right, Nell," and Mary sighed. "You don't know what it feels like to lie here so helplessly. You can help—help. You have been helping poor little Dicky all this time—you have been following Christ. 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me.'"

"I don't follow Christ!"

"Don't you, dear? If Christ lived Himself on the Scarth (and Nazareth was probably a wickeder place than the Scarth) and if you found Him tired after He had been going about all day doing good, would you give Him a drink if He needed it? Would you see to it that He had a soft pillow on which to rest His weary head? Would you make up His fire clean and bright on a cold winter's night, so that the Christ should find it warm and cheerful when He returned?"

"I would do all yon."

"And if some one had wronged you—insulted you—hurt your life with a great hurt, would you forgive as Christ forgave?"

"No, no—oh no, niver!"

Mary looked up startled at the vehemence of the reply, and then she sighed again.

"Well, dear Nell, ask Him for His love—His real love He gives so freely—

> "'To those who fall how kind Thou art!
> How good to those who seek!
> But what to those who find? Ah, this
> Nor tongue nor pen can show.
> The love of Jesus, what it is
> None but His loved ones know!'"

Nell was silent.

Then the door opened and Ryder entered the room. He was retiring as he saw Nell, but Mary called him forward.

"I wonder whether you would mind going on to see Dicky Dixon. He has sent for me and I can't, and I wondered——'

Ryder looked from Mary to Nell.

"Dicky Dixon? Why, yes, certainly, Mary. Is he very bad?"

"*In extremis* I am afraid. Oh, I wish——"

"Don't wish!" he returned kindly. "I know you are having a bad day to-day. Yes, of course I will go. I had better go at once. I'll come with you, Nell."

He knew Nell perfectly well, and was not in the least afraid of compromising himself by walking up the street with her. Such an idea never once suggested itself to him.

So they hurried off, and on the way Arthur Calthwaite rode past and was preparing to salute Ryder; then he looked with blank amazement at his companion, and recovering himself quickly he raised his hat and bestowed on Nell one of his most radiant smiles.

Ryder half wondered what was making Calthwaite so

pleasant to him, but was soon absorbed again in thinking of his visit.

But Nell glowed all over, and could have shaken herself in her disgust and mortification, for she knew that in her surprise she had been betrayed into answering smile with smile.

"Mr. Ryder, you hed best wait a minut," said Nell as they came to the little house.

Nell entered quietly. "Dicky, darlin', she couldn't—she couldn't really!"

Dicky burst into tears. "Oh, Nell, Nell, and I wanted her. I'se waited of her and I wanted her to pray. I kna' she could!"

"Well, don't fret thisell, Dicky lad; thoo moant fret saá! Now be a good lad and I'se tell tha summut. I'se fetched Mr. Ryder, he can pray!"

"Mr. Ryder fra t' School?"

"Eye. Coom in, sir!"

The young man entered bending his six feet instinctively at the door.

"What, crying my boy? No, I know I'm not Miss Mary, I wish I were; but I want you to give me your message for her!"

Ryder sat down and took the limp fingers in his large, strong hand.

"Why, Dicky lad, you are going to Jesus Christ!"

"Eye, sir!"

"Very, very soon!"

"I hope saá!"

"So do I, Dicky. Shall we ask Him about it? You and I, Dicky?"

"Eye, sir?"

Ryder knelt down by the boy and prayed to the Triune God, commending the soul of the child to the infinite fountain of love. He prayed for the parents, for Nell, for himself, that all might be found worthy of the high calling, and then again he repeated his request that the Tender Shepherd

Himself would carry the lamb over the rough stones and through the river safe to the other side.

But Nell, kneeling by the bed, burst into a fit of uncontrollable weeping.

Then Ryder, rising, leaned over the boy and whispered, "Fear not. It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

And Dicky, stretching out his hand for some flowers, with which Nell always kept him plentifully supplied, whispered back, "Give them to Miss Mary, and thank her kindly for Ottarthwaite. I niver thanked her, and I wanted to. Happen I'se see her at t' far end as soon as any on ye. Tell her I'se look out."

Ryder took the flowers and passed quickly from the house. As he walked up the garden Eleanor came running along, having a game with Vixen to relieve the Sunday quiet.

"Oh, Mr. Ryder, isn't she sweet? Look how she can jump!" Then seeing the roses she laughed, "Oh, what lovely roses! Are they for——"

"They are for Mary," he returned rather awkwardly. "I have just brought them. A little dying boy has sent them to her."

Eleanor blushed crimson. "Oh, I beg your pardon. I mean—I did not know." And overcome with sudden shyness she fled into the house.

Two days later Nell called and poured out her heart to Mary in her strong, abandoned way.

"He's dead! Dead, Miss Mary! Lile Dicky's dead!"

Mary again acted the comforter, and comforted her with the comfort wherewith she also had been comforted of God.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Now William Carradus and his wife often discussed Nell and her prospects. William thought she was a fine lass spoiling, and Janet thought she was a "deal too proud."

Nell blankly refused all their kindly offers to modify her life, and they, being extremely fond of John Fleming, thought they saw in him the solution of the problem. If Nell would only marry Fleming then all would be well. They went so far as to invite John to their comfortable Sunday evening supper-table to instruct him as to his duty.

"Thoo mun git her, my lad. She'll hev tha, if thoo sticks tull her. Lasses needs to be stuck tull! Thee get Nell and tho'll hev a grand lass, though I won't say but what she might do wi' a bit more religion," remarked William.

"Eye, John, and thee be sharp! She's doing na good whar she is!" put in Janet. "She'll be oop to summut if she doesn't settle wi' thee! Them bonny lasses mun aulus ha' some mak o' courtin' gaain on, and Nell—what she started courtin' afoor she was out of her impidence!" and Janet operated on the foaming coffee.

John smiled rather a sickly smile. "You are very kind, but I don't think a man should force himself on a girl, however much he likes her."

"Eye, but Nell's a bit different from some lasses! Them as wants her 'ull hev to push!"

But William sat thinking things out. "John, my lad, I hev it. Thee leave her alaán. Thee don't offer to gaa near her! Happen that 'ull fetch her. Theer's nowt sometimes like leaving a lass alaán!"

"I'm sure I never bother her!" said poor John.

"Naá, but thoo looks at her, and thoo fetches her flowers and the lass knas weel enough as thoo wad run t' toon length for her any day. It's bad for lasses is sic like!"

John wondered if the couple were right. He was getting a little weary of Nell's continuous snubbing, for ever since Whitsuntide she had never seemed quite herself. Sometimes she was cheerful and pleasant, but just when he thought he was getting on a little, down went the shutter again, and he was left in blank darkness. He thought it might be wise to try ignoring Nell, and see what happened, but with the decision he thought he was treading on very dangerous ground.

It was quite true that ever since the Whitsuntide trip Nell had been different. A still deeper discontent with her surroundings was manifest. Her bitter words came oftener, her cheerful laughter and delightful mockery came less and less. She thought she was intensely angry with Calthwaite, and she argued to herself that here was another case like that of her hateful father and her despised mother coming again.

Sometimes she grew morbid, and wondered if she were beset by fate ; then again a delicious thought would come over and over again that perhaps this time it was all right. Perhaps God was taking pity on her, and she was meant to rise after all. She constantly read in the newspapers of wonderful matches between actresses and dukes, and barmaids and officers ; perhaps the luck was coming her way. She even took to wondering what the lovely Eleanor would say when she, Nell Carradus, rose to her level. All such thoughts led practically to Nell's treating her devoted Jack with a petulance which amounted often to rudeness. He was indeed, refined compared with the other lads who sought her favour, but when she compared him with the gentlemanly suitor whose every tone breathed this world's politest elegance, and when she considered that after all Mr. Calthwaite had behaved thoroughly respectfully to her, and that when he met her in the street he had raised his hat as if she had been the highest lady in the county—when she considered these things, she wondered, and wonder on such a matter was dangerous.

The subject of the Spring Musical Festival was not allowed to drop, and Eleanor soon found herself deeply involved in the business. Young willing workers always find work, and Miss Calthwaite soon put her on to a Committee, and urged her to conduct a choir.

"You must bring a choir, Miss Carradus, you must indeed!" and Eleanor, nothing loath, talked the matter over at The Abbey, and found that all cordially furthered the design.

"You can get up a Scarth Choir," said Ryder. "If you manage to bring cultured music from such material you will be a wonder worker."

The idea of difficulty roused Eleanor's ambition. "Oh, do let me try, it would be such fun; I should feel I was a little use in such a terribly usefully filled house!" Eleanor was continually throwing out little shots at Ryder and Mary regarding their innumerable public works.

"I think you may find some surprises even in amongst the Scarthsiders," laughed Mary.

"Oh, well, do get the choir up for me, I am just dying to begin!"

So Ryder went forth and let it be known that there was an intention to send in a Scarth Choir for competition, and immediately the songsters of the district set to work to try their voices, and talk the matter over. They always did talk everything over on the Scarth, and when it became known that Miss Eleanor Carradus was to be the conductor, the interest further deepened.

"Eh, she'll hev larnt her music i' Germany. I mind her father was auus for t' music," Betsy proclaimed.

It seemed that men, women, girls and boys were wanted to form the choir, and Ryder did his utmost to stir up enthusiasm on the part of some, and damp it on that of hopeless but conceited cases.

"Now, Nell, lass!" remarked Ben Sinkinson, "noo thoo hes thy chance. Thy cousin is comin' to larn tha music. Happen thoo'll larn her summut!"

"I'se larn thee summut, Ben Sinkinson, if thoo doesn't kep thy impidence to thisell!"

"Eye, and saá will I!" cried Jane Ann, bitterly, "Eh, thee ger oot wi tha, thoo d——d divil!"

"Shut oop, Jane, wi yon talk!" said Nell. She was not fond of the girl, quite the reverse, but foul language hurt her in a strange new way.

But Ben threw back a mocking "Ha, ha, Jane lass!" whereat the girl clenched her fists in impotent wrath.

That night Jane seeking Nell, found her alone in the little kitchen as she was busily cleaning up the day's litter.

"Jane Ann Martin!"

"Eye, Nell, thoo may weel exe ma! I thowt as happen——'

"Thoo thowt? What did ta think?"

Nell was vexed at being interrupted. She had suffered much from the girl's bitter, jealous tongue, so her face was far from propitious.

The visitor feeling the tone, rose again. She had sunk down wearily on a chair close to the door.

"Naá. It's a' reet, I'se nut bother! I nobbut thowt as happen if thoo telt him——"

"Telt wha?"

Nell was still on her knees, but she stopped her washing and leant back against the dresser.

Something in the girl's look struck her for the first time, and a gleam of comprehensive pity swept over her face. She had seen so many, and here was the miserable catastrophe once again at hand. Another woman spoiled!—a woman not seventeen.

"Oh, Jane!"

"Eye, Nell, that's it! I'se coomed, for I thowt—— Oh, Nell, happen thoo could git him to wed ma!"

The girl laid her face down in her hands and sobbed hysterically. Nell rose, went to the cottage door and locked it.

"Oh, Jane, Jane, he hesn't?"

"Eye, he hes, he hes! And noo he waint wed ma! I'se begged and prayed—and—he's a devil a——" And Jane poured forth every curse in her vocabulary, which was not a limited one.

"And thoo com to me?"

"Eye, Nell!" and she lifted up her poor, plain, irresolute face, so young and yet so old. "Thoo's sa strang! Thoo's aulus kept thisell to thisell. Oh, eye! I'se called (mocked) tha many and many a time, but I'se kent aulus as thoo's kept thisell tull thisell and I was mad when Ben looked at tha—and noo.—Eh, Nell, did ta iver want to murder anybody?" The girl's eyes grew bright with a kind of scared brightness, and she dropped her voice to a shrinking whisper.

"Eye!" responded Nell.

"He promised to wed ma at t' August holida'!"

"But thoo doesn't want to wed him?" Nell's voice was incredulous, and she emphasised the last word.

"If he wad!"

With a great pity Nell looked at the wretched girl. Oh, yes, she knew the story well. Boys and girls together, reckless, mischievous, sinful, and then the ugly disaster.

The old horror she had had for years stole over her with a weird power as she stood by this sister in sorrow. It felt suddenly as if this nightmare of sin were stealing up nearer and nearer her own life; as if she were powerless; as if she saw herself also sitting on that chair with wide, fierce eyes. Oh, it was a shame—a shame that the woman should bear all the burden for the sin. The woman and the little child.

"I can't hide it long, Nell," whimpered the girl. "I'se seen em whisperin'—and oh, my God! I wish I was deád!"

"And yet thoo wad wed him!"

"Eh, I wad."

"I'se do my best! Now get tha yam. Thoo'l ha to bear thy burden, my lass, as many another hes hed to do, but I'se do my best."

So the girl slipped away, and Nell, making short work of the cleaning, hurried off on her errand of wrath. She found Ben Sinkinson as she expected in the street; he was enjoying himself with a number of young men, but seeing Nell alone, and he having the protection of a good audience, it struck him that he might venture on "fun."

"Hullo, Nell—Miss Nell! Lookin' for me?"

"Eh, Ben Sinkinson, I was! It's a grand neet."

Ben looked surprised, this was indeed amusing.

"Happen a walk down on t' Moss Road was what thoo was thinkin' aboot, Nell!"

"T' vara spot!" she returned cheerfully.

"Well, I'se jiggered! So long, mates! When a feller can git t' 'Bacca Queen theer's luck on t' roád!"

The girl kept up the light chat until she was down on the quiet road.

"Let's go down by the river," Nell suggested. It was rather dark, and she turned from the lamp-lighted road on to the wide strand of shillow, the very same place where poor Dicky had had his last swing.

"Thoo's queer, Nell. What! thou waint tek my arm?"

"Naá, I waint!"

"Then what did ta coom here for?"

"I'se nut coom to bide, thee don't think it! I'se nobbut coom to tell tha as thoo mun wed Jane Ann Martin this next month."

Ben turned with a loud laugh and a heavy oath.

"Thoo waint, thoo saft cooard!"

"Wed Jane Ann—yon dalf silly lass! What does ta tak me for? Niver, by gum!"

"Then thoo's a divil, Ben Sinkinson!"

"So I is, happen!" mocked the great youth, "So I is, happen; but wed Jane Ann! Niver, by all t' divils as iver tasted fire. Why, Nell, it's thee, thee as I want to wed—thee, Nell!" and he pulled the girl towards him, but Nell tossed herself away.

"Oh, but when lasses wants lads by theirsells in t' dark by a river they mun expect! Coom, Nell, one kiss—a good hearty kiss, lass, from t' bonniest lips i' Moorshire, and I'se let thee gaa!" and he made for her again.

Nell waited motionless. Then, as he closed upon her, she put out her strength and thrust him splash into the shallow river. "Wet thy lips theer!" she mocked, as he floundered spluttering at her feet, and, with a cheerful "Good-neet, my lad!" she left him.

CHAPTER XXIX

ONE morning Nell received a letter, which she opened, read, and straightway pocketed.

"Wha's thy letter fra?" asked her mother.

"It's nowt, mother," but with all her control Nell could not avoid the telltale blush.

Maria Carradus looked quizzically at her.

"A love-letter, happen? I'se be glad when thoo sattles thisell, my lass!"

"Eye, I kna! And then thoo'll hev t' hoose to thisell."

It was the month of September, and the town was placarded all over with announcements of the Grand Primrose Ball, to be opened by Lady Preston and patronised by Sir Matthew Preston and all the county Tories in Moorshire. Not that all the Tory householders came in person to the exceedingly mixed affair, but they sent their menkind, and a few ladies came to support Lady Preston, who, as wife of the coming candidate for the division, was bound to make an appearance.

At the moment Moorshire rejoiced in the possession of a Liberal member, but the Tories were mustering all their forces of wealth and position, hot and strong, to rout the Radicals. Sir Matthew, being not only a very handsome but a very fine-spoken man with plenty of land and tenant voters, was well supported by his land-owning neighbours, who also possessed plenty of tenants, but moderate oratorical powers. So this year there was a good deal of excitement about the Ball, and Farbiggin, being strongly Radical in tendency, looked on with interest. As far, however, as the Farbiggin young men and women were concerned a ball was a ball, Tory or Radical; and the Tory ball being grander and more stylish than the Radical ball, was the more prized as giving the better opportunity for mixing in really high society. So every factory girl who could scrape the ticket money together wanted to go.

The tobacco-shop girls were not behind in their enthusiasm. Those who could go discussed their clothes without intermission, and those who couldn't discussed the clothes of the others.

Nell would not give any answer to the many queries as to whether she would go or not.

Fleming certainly would not be going. He did not care for balls, in fact considered them of the world worldly, though

as the time drew near he and his master spent a busy week in tastefully decorating the hall.

Then Nell received a letter. And that afternoon she told the girls she thought she might as well go.

The moment a girl has decided to go to a ball, her mind leaps to the question of clothes, and as Nell was calling on her Aunt Janet she could not resist opening the discussion. And while the girl chattered, Janet's worldly spirit leaped upwards regardless of years of steadfast repression, and, waxing enthusiastic, she insisted on bearing all expense and setting her niece up properly.

Janet had grown very fond of Nell, in spite of the pride of her independent spirit, which though it constantly baffled her, she could not help admiring, and she was glad when at last she saw a chance of getting a favour accepted.

"Eye, my lass, what, thoo can tek a present fra thy awn aunt! What, even t' gentry folk give theersells many a present, when them as gets them hes plenty afore!" So Nell somehow could not resist the temptation, and as her uncle was out, she and her aunt chattered mischief, and had a delightful time together.

But when William came in, after Nell had left, and heard what his wife had done, he was very irate.

"Thoo's done a daft thing, Janet woman. Thoo hes indeed! Yon Nell is flighty enough as it is. Thoo's sent her wi' a girt push down toward t' devil! Theer's na good 'ull coom of it. Mark my words!" And Janet retired to rest much depressed, but a promise was a promise, and the deed was done, and for once she could have her fling.

So she kept her shopping appointment with Nell the next day, and felt that she had not enjoyed herself so much since John Carradus's funeral.

The one condition Janet made was that Nell should robe at her house, and to this Nell gladly acquiesced, for somehow she did not care to discuss the ball with her mother.

Janet was highly delighted at the result of Nell's taste and her own ample expenditure.

"Now look, William! Look, father!" she pleaded. "Look, she is thy awn niece. Thoo mun say as she's bonny!"

And William looked at the vision he saw standing in the old-fashioned kitchen, with its oaken wainscotting and blue flagged floor.

Then he sighed, "Eh, Nell, Nell, thoo'll repent, thoo'll repent! Thoo knas even t' divil can mek himself into an angel of light!"

"She's an angel of light!" said Janet.

"Then I'se a divil, I suppose!" and Nell laughed. "Niver heed, Uncle William, I aulus was a bad 'un thoo knas!"

"But the Lord wants tha to be a good 'un, my lass!"

There was a knock at the door, and Janet went to open it.

"Come in, John, and welcome. You've just come the right minute."

Nell felt inclined to slip away, but this was impossible.

"Nell!"

"John!" and she made him a sweeping courtesy, but her cheeks grew bright at his look of undisguised admiration.

The frock was of fine soft muslin over primrose-coloured silk, and a long yellow sash surrounded the trim waist and fell in a long sweep to the ground. The bodice was cut so as to show the whiteness of the neck and the set of the head. Nell wore no jewels, for she possessed none, but the creamy chrysanthemums lying across her breast seemed to supply their place. Her sleeves were transparent to the elbow, and fine white kid gloves and dainty white satin shoes completed the outfit.

Truly Janet had done well.

As to Nell's face, and shining brown hair, and graceful figure, these were the same as always, only enhanced by the delicate and unusual setting, and her eyes were bright with girlish excitement, for Nell had never seen anything quite so lovely before, as the sight which met her eyes in the tall, shining mirror, which was one of William's special possessions. And the sight was sufficiently exhilarating, and she laughed to think that the girl laughing back at her was really her own self.

A wild desire seized John Fleming to come too, to follow the girl—to watch her success. But he cast the thought behind him, partly because he feared it was a temptation, and mainly, perhaps, because he was hardly sure of a welcome.

"Well, Jack, and how do I look!" she could not resist saying.

"Look, Nell. You look like—like—a real lady!"

He could not have chosen a better compliment, and Nell's eyes sparkled with delight, and she promptly became pleasant and genial. She chatted a few moments, and then it was time to go.

"Well, good-neet, t' lasses 'ull be waiting of ma!" Nell was going with a number of girl friends, for she knew nothing of the laws of chaperonage.

When Nell took off her cloak the girls were aghast at her splendour. They all yearned for Aunt Janets of their own. Still it was surprising how pretty many of them looked in their simple finery.

Nell had hardly been five minutes in the ball-room before Calthwaite found her out.

"Then you got my little letter?" and he smiled.

"Yes, I got it. T' postman always brings letters as are sent!"

"Oh, but you came, Miss Nell. Your card, please."

Nell loved dancing; she danced well, and so did Calthwaite. It was one of the things this man really could do, and it was joy indeed to glide over the beautiful floor to the strains of music which sent the magical desire tingling through every pulse.

Very soon people were asking who the girl was, and women looked and men stared, and Nell, gaining more confidence every moment, looked her fairest, stateliest self.

Calthwaite was thoroughly enjoying himself. He had a knack of seizing upon the ripest fruits of life. The Lady Margaret Temple's sour grapes were indeed sour before this luscious bunch just falling into his grasp.

He was obliged to relinquish her now and again, for Nell found herself quite the rage.

"Miss Carradus? Miss Carradus was whispered about. Any relation to *the* Miss Carradus?"

But Eleanor was not there, partly because the Glyns did not frequent balls, and partly because if they had done so this was the Tory celebration, and Mary and Ryder were certainly not Tories.

"And who is the lady in the yellow sash talking to Dr. Maddison?" asked Sir Matthew of one of the stewards. "I don't seem to know her. An exceedingly stylish girl!"

"That lady?" and the steward half smiled, for he happened to be one of the managers at the tobacco factory. "Oh, she is a very well-known Farbiggin beauty. Altogether the rage in some circles! She is known by the title of the 'Bacca Queen.' She holds quite a court."

"I am afraid I do not exactly understand."

"She is really a tobacco factory girl! and a Scarthsider! Get Nell, the 'Bacca Queen, on your side, Sir Matthew, and you'll poll the Scarth voters solid—they all bow to Nell. In fact we do ourselves at the works."

Sir Matthew strolled forward. He was extremely anxious to make friendly overtures to all sorts and conditions this evening.

"Ah, how do you do, Dr. Maddison? Delightful muster this."

"Yes, they all seem enjoying themselves mightily."

"I wonder if I may have the pleasure of an introduction to your lady?" and Sir Matthew bestowed on Nell a benign and patronising smile.

Dr. Maddison gave Nell a swift, comical look—he was not going to give his "lady" away, however.

"Oh, certainly, Sir Matthew, delighted. Sir Matthew Preston—Miss Carradus!"

Sir Matthew bowed his tall, stately figure, but never a movement made Nell.

"No manners," thought the candidate, "Still one must rough it amongst these people."

"May I have the pleasure of this coming waltz? I still enjoy a good waltz," and he smiled graciously.

"I beg your pardon?"

Nell spoke coolly with ever so slight a hint of the Scarth accent, and bent her head back slightly.

"If you are not engaged with a younger partner, Miss Carradus, perhaps you will honour me." Sir Matthew could not persuade his tone to avoid a slight touch of sarcasm.

"I would not dance with you for a kingdom, Sir Matthew Preston." She spoke clearly and slowly. Then she bowed slightly, turned her back on the baronet and strolled away.

Sir Matthew looked after her, and laughed a short, awkward laugh.

"Good gracious, Doctor! What manners! Was I too old for her, or what?"

"A wilful beauty, I suppose. But Nell Carradus generally has a reason of her own for what she does." The doctor did not care for Sir Matthew, but to himself he thought, "Good heavens, there's something beneath that! I must find out. When Nell Carradus throws her head back like that she means battle, and when Nell means battle let the British army beware!"

But the music played seductively, and the innumerable dancers flooded the floor, and Nell was soon taking her place with the rest.

Time after time Calthwaite selected her, and her factory friends looked on with mixed jealousy and pride; but Nell, throwing herself into the present, kept an eye on the baronet waiting her chance.

Once in the supper-room she happened to hear a snatch of conversation which sent the blood rushing to her brow. "Oh, well, what can one expect of these low breeds out for a holiday. But she is a d——d fine girl for all that."

So Nell waited still more earnestly for her chance, and it came at last as chances sometimes do come.

The hall was very hot, and at one end the windows opened on to a balcony overlooking the High Street. It was getting rather late, and Sir Matthew was tired. He had danced a great deal, made conversation, and courted popularity until he felt that at all cost he must have a breath of fresh air.

He opened the window and stepped out.

Quick as thought the girl followed him, and closed the door behind her.

"Sir Matthew!" Still the quiet, slightly artificial voice.

He turned quickly and saw the tall figure before him.

"Miss Carradus! To what do I owe this—this pleasure? What can I do for you?" and he smiled, remembering the coming election.

She came up to him and laid her hand on his arm—it trembled slightly at the first contact, then steadied, and she looked fearlessly into his eyes.

He moved back slightly. "Was this girl mad?"

She seemed to read his thoughts.

"No, I am not mad—do not alarm yourself. I am only one of those low breeds out for a holiday, Sir Matthew!"

The Baronet could not for a moment think of any reply, but drew back still further, leaning his back up against the balcony rail. She still, however, kept her hand on his arm—still looked straight into his eyes.

"Have you ever heard of Maria Carradus?"

He started violently. "No, don't move. It is all right! You are not afraid! Afraid! You couldn't be afraid, you know. Not afraid of your own daughter!"

"Good heavens!" he ejaculated, and his lips were as white as his countenance.

Mechanically he noticed the panting of her breast beneath the muslins. Here was an unexpected—an awful catastrophe. A horrible miscalculation. Sir Matthew had for long years been able to settle matters with Maria Carradus. That had been comparatively simple. But this handsome, queenly daughter with her proud fierceness! What was he to do with her? Something must be done at once. This very moment. Why, the fulfilment of his highest ambition might depend on his stopping such a scandal. His political career lay in the grasp of this girl who stood fixedly gazing into his eyes, whose strong hand grasped his arm.

"It's no use your saying 'Good heavens,' Sir Matthew," and

she tightened her grasp. "Do you know that I've cursed you as a child—I have cursed you as a girl, and I have been waitin'—waitin' to curse you here—here when I am a woman grown! I have been waitin' for this hour!"

She stood back from him a pace, but her eyes never left his face.

"You are cold!" He was shivering in his thin suit. The cold wind was blowing strong against her neck and arms and rioting with her hair, but Nell was not cold.

"You are cold!" she repeated scornfully. "I am glad that you are cold! Oh, that you were cold for all eternity! Maria Carradus has often been cold, and her little Nell, your daughter, has often been bitterly, bitterly cold. I am glad that you are cold, Sir Matthew!"

"My good girl!"

"My good girl!" she mocked, and throwing away all restraint, she burst into her strongest Scarth vernacular. "Thee and such as thee are t' curse o' t' warld! My moother—oh, there's naá love lost atwixt me and my moother. But for a' that, my moother was young yance. She was yance nineteen, as I to-day. She was bonny yance as I is to-neet! Then thoo—thoo com and took t' life out on her. She niver lived reet sin thoo com tull her wi thy handsome face and leein' tongue! And to-neet——" Nell herself started violently as she cast her eyes down on to the street below. "Sees ta. Sees ta, Sir Matthew!" she said in a hoarse, unnatural voice, seizing his unwilling arm again. "Sees ta theer!" She pointed to the street below. Amongst a few loungers waiting to see the close of the ball was the miserable figure of a woman. She was having a noisy altercation with a policeman, who was trying to persuade her away.

The man looked—impelled by the girl's fierce demand. Even as they gazed they could distinctly hear the maudlin sentence, "Let ma a-be, let ma a-be! Theer's a lass o' mine in yonder—a lass wi' a yaller frock!"

The situation staggered the baronet. No denial was possible. He knew the woman in the street below, he

could recognise himself clearly in this girl's handsome, high-bred face. Sir Matthew knew that there were hundreds in Moorshire who had slipped in their youth, and who were busily seeking in their later years to live in respectable irreproachableness, yet the world is an odd, inconsistent place, and should this thing come out—should the opposite party get wind of the interesting scandal—should even his own friends be persuaded of the truth, he knew that his chance was over.

Maria Carradus, as so often happens in like cases, had kept secret the circumstances attending her first bitter disaster, with a pathetic honour, and he had willingly subsidised her on application, on condition that she kept her councel. But he felt now, instinctively, that there was no question of subsidising here. He seemed to hear the fatal "Checkmate" as he looked round every corner of the board for some loophole of defence or escape. There was nothing, however, for it but again to try conciliation.

"Upon my word I am really very sorry—very sorry indeed to see this trouble of yours, but, my dear," and the baronet smiled with a nervous wanness to which Nell's eyes glared their challenge, "I have always sought to treat your mother generously. You must not be so furious. No one can regret more than myself the—the accident!"

The girl leaped from him and drawing herself up to her full height she replied slowly and proudly, "Does ta call me an accident, father?"

They eyed each other steadily—he inwardly cursing himself—she waiting at ease for the reply which did not come.

Was that vision of anger and beauty a mere "accident"?

The baronet shivered again. How could he get rid of this girl?

"What do you want?" His voice was suppressed into an artificial mildness.

"Want? Not them five-pund notes thoo sends noo and agen to my mother when she's short o' beer! I want nowt—

nowt. I don't even want thy naám! Thy reet spot is ont' street down yonder," and she moved towards him. There was an ugly menace in her look and the baronet began to bluster.

"Good heavens, madam, but you forget yourself!"

"Forgit! Nell Carradus niver forgits! It's Nell Carradus' father as tries to forgit. Thoo stirs and I'se oppen these glass doors and tell iverybody at t' Ball as thoos is my father. My father! Father o' t' 'Bacca Queen!"

Sir Matthew positively trembled. He was perfectly aware that there was only that sheet of glass between himself and social ruin.

"Wha's freetened noo?" she mocked. "Thoo's a bonny man, t' bonniest man i' Moorshire—and I'se the bonniest woman, so they saá! Father and dawghter! If thee and me stood togither i' yon room—Champion! It 'ull be a grand thing for Sir Matthew Preston, na doubt, when he comes vote-cadgin' round t' Scarth to hev t' 'Bacca Queen tull him for a dawghter! Naá, bide thee still. I'se nut thra tha ower intull t' street to seek my mother this time. Thy broken neck's nut worth mine. Beside, theer's better ways than yon," and she turned to re-enter the brilliant ball-room.

But her movement caused Sir Matthew to leap forward.

"Miss—Miss Carradus, one moment. I pray you. You don't mean to say that you dare——"

"Niver heed what I dare! Nell Carradus can dare maist things. It's in her blood!"

"Yes, yes," he stammered hurriedly. "But you know I am willing to do anything in reason—anything. If there is any way in which I can make up to you personally, Miss Carradus, for——"

"Theer's some things i' this warld, Sir Matthew, as can niver be made up—some things as follow folk tull their graves. I kna, and you kna as I kna. That's plenty for you to think ower for to-neet. Theer's plenty o' time!"

And with this threat she turned and left him, and Sir Matthew, shrinking back from the flood of light as the

curtained door opened, could not control the groan that burst from him—a groan of fierce anger, humiliation, and helpless suspense.

As Nell re-entered the room with white cheeks and flaming eyes she encountered Dr. Maddison.

"It's a cold night," she remarked nonchalantly, but she dropped her eyes.

Now the doctor had seen her follow Sir Matthew and he knew that it was no cold wind that had driven the colour from her face.

"It is, Nell. Well, get yourself ready and I will see you home."

His tone rather than the words sent the quick blood flushing back into the proud face.

"Is it late?" and she clasped her hands together nervously.

"Certainly it is late. Besides, you have had enough, Nell. Do you hear? I intend to take you home, and I can't wait!"

The long period of the doctor's training worked on the girl, and she turned reluctantly.

"What, surely not going Miss Carradus?" said Calthwaite at her elbow.

"Yes, she is going with me," said the doctor shortly. "She is under my care to-night!"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Doctor. I did not know that——"

"That I take a great interest in Miss Carradus?" continued the doctor, looking Calthwaite quietly in the face.

"Ah!" and he laughed pleasantly as Nell departed, "she is a girl to take an interest in. You are a lucky man."

"Now, Nell," said the doctor as they went up the street, "tell me exactly what you have been doing."

"Only cursin' my father," said the girl defiantly. The cold was striking through her thin cloak now.

"Good gracious! Nell! Explain yourself!"

"He's my father. Him as you called Sir Matthew. I introduced myself to him again to-night—and—he didn't—it didn't suit him. That's a'!"

"Do you think you were wise?"

"Do you?"

"I think, Nell, that you will have to be careful—very careful. Nell, my dear, I am old enough to be your father myself. I like you, and what's more I respect you—respect you, Nell; do you understand?"

Nell shivered.

"I hear you," she spoke doggedly.

"Yes, but I want you to understand. I have seen much to-night. I fear strong temptation is coming to you, Nell. I'm not a religious man, far from it, but if ever you prayed in your life, Nell Carradus, pray now. You know what I mean."

They walked a few steps together silently.

"Now off with you to bed," and Dr. Maddison put out his hand, for they were at the door.

Nell put out her hand.

"Good-neet, Doctor. Thank you for comin'. But theer's naá bed for me to-neet. T' mill bells 'ull be ringin' afore long now. I'se get my breakfast afore t' 'Bacca shop oppens. My mother 'ull be waitin' of me unless she's in t' lock-up. I saa her in t' street nut long sin. Aye, I is a happy, happy lass!"

"Well, God bless you!" said the doctor. He turned sharply away. Something in the unutterable contrasts in this girl's existence touched him acutely. She must not, must not go under. He must really do something—but what?

And Nell lifted the latch and entered her home.

Her mother was still out, so she quickly removed her finery. Before doing so, however, she took one last wistful look at herself in the rickety little glass, then she doggedly put on the old working frock, made up the fire again and prepared the frugal breakfast.

The early morning light was creeping round and it was very cold, and her clogs felt heavy after the satin slippers, but the tea was refreshing.

So Nell sat by the fire until her mother came rioting in, exultantly waving a crackling note.

"Eh, Nell lass, I fund him. I did fer sure, joost as he was gettin' in tull his carriage. And t' minnut he seed me, he was

oot wi this! I'd nowt to say, nowt at a'. But I heard him leein' tull his wife—'a beggar woman, my dear, I've given her a copper,'" and the drunken woman mimicked the baronet's grand style. "Noo, my lass, I'se do for a bit."

And she sat down by the fire and warmed her miserable wind-driven body, and smoothing out the five-pound note on her knee she looked at it lovingly.

She muttered away to herself for a little while and then fell asleep, the note resting loosely on her knee.

Nell looked at the woman and she looked at the note. She lifted the note with the tips of her fingers, and regarded it attentively, then she looked at the glowing fire. The strained, woebegone appearance of the woman seemed to hold her back from executing her strong desire. Her own wonderful success to-night brought back her mother's rambling histories of the days long ago, when she was a bright, bonny girl. Again she traced the signs of misery on the prematurely old face.

"It's a' she hes to live for noo," she said relentingly, as if excusing herself. Then she laid the note in the rough, ill-kept hand and the woman even in her sleep clutched it tightly. Soon after the bells began their insolent pealing of "Oh dear, what can the matter be?" and Nell turned hurriedly off to her work.

CHAPTER XXX

"THE fatal hour is come," said Ryder one evening shortly after the celebrated Primrose Ball. "I hope you do not feel very nervous? I have done my utmost to get the very best that the Scarth affords, and have seriously risked my personal popularity in the cause of music!"

Eleanor was standing by the fire near Mary. Dinner was over, and she was already dressed in scarlet cloak, white fur, and a little round red cap.

"Eleanor is not nervous," laughed Mary. "She is panting

to begin. She has been studying the music for weeks, and is glorying in her difficulties."

"I'm not exactly nervous, but that may be because I don't know. No, I'm not nervous about the music, but I wonder——" She stopped.

"Well, dear?" said Mary kindly.

"Well, Miss Glyn, it does feel rather funny to know that perhaps one may be going to meet relations! Shall I, do you think?"

Father, son, and daughter had already thoroughly discussed the matter of Eleanor's meeting her relations, and Mary had urged extreme simplicity of action. "If she asks, tell her. We can't play Providence beyond a certain point, father. I think we have managed very well to keep her so separate until she has found her ground in England."

So when the inevitable question came Mary was ready.

"Yes, dear, I think you will. There will be some of the Carraduses in the choir. Several of them are very musical. William Carradus, your father's brother, and two of his sons, Reuben and Jo, are all wonderful singers."

"And Nell, of course!" put in Ryder.

"Who is Nell?" asked Eleanor.

"That tall girl you took a fancy to at Whitsuntide, if you remember!"

"Oh, of course! Nell, the 'Bacca Queen, they called her. Why, she's a glorious girl—and is she really my relation?"

Mr. Glyn came into the room at the moment and heard the question.

"Whom are you talking about?"

"Why, father, will you tell Miss Carradus about Nell?" said Ryder.

"Nell Carradus?" said Mr. Glyn in a matter-of-fact voice. "Yes, she is your cousin. She is a girl I am extremely sorry for. Such a wretched home. She seems one of those girls for whom there is no chance."

"Is she my first cousin?"

"Yes."

"Then her father was my father's brother?"

"No, her mother was his sister——"

"Really, father," put in Ryder hastily, "I don't think we need worry Miss Carradus with genealogies!"

"Oh, but I would much rather know," said Eleanor rather petulantly; "I might as well know everything. I have been thinking for a long time that it is stupid to be going about with my head in the sand. I'm not an ostrich. Now, aren't you on my side, Miss Glyn?"

Mary answered the appeal with a smile. "I don't see, father, that she will be any worse for knowing. Eleanor is extremely strong-minded, I have discovered!"

"She will not be any worse," replied Mr. Glyn, a trifle reprovingly, "only, my dear, you know that her grandfather preferred that she should not mix with her Scarth relations. However, I think we can keep the spirit of the desire, and yet tell her what she would like to know. You see, Miss Eleanor, Nell's mother was your father's only sister, and she was never married, so Nell takes her mother's name. That is all."

"Dear me!" returned Eleanor lightly, and opened her heavy cloak. "Well, it really is most extraordinary to find one's relations creeping out unawares one by one. I shall get them all collected in time, I suppose. Does this girl know me?"

"Oh dear, yes. Everybody knows who you are!" said Mary. "I expect you have been more discussed than any one in Farbiggin these last few months!"

"Mary!" remonstrated Ryder. "How can you!"

"Oh, I know Eleanor better than you do. I have discovered that she is quite a sensible person. She can stand my rubbish!"

"Then you'll let me be introduced, Mr. Glyn?" cried Eleanor. "Oh, what fun! I foresee a scene! I wonder if she hates me?"

"I do not suppose for a moment that she loves you," and he smiled, then added soberly, "I think I ought to tell you

that her mother was hurt, and perhaps rightly so, that your grandfather cut her out of his will. I am sorry to say it has made a sore place, and probably Nell feels the difference in your respective positions."

"Why, of course. But is not that rather a shame, Mr. Glyn? Do you mean that I have got it all, and this cousin has nothing?"

"That is the present arrangement!"

"Oh, I think that is abominable. I really do! Don't you, Miss Glyn?"

"Well, dear, of course, a will is a will, and at present——"

"But why can't I give them some money now?" She looked questioningly at the lawyers, father and son, as if she had found such an easy way out of the difficulty. "You must know yourself, Mr. Glyn, that it is quite absurd for me to have so much. Surely I could give them some?"

"I am afraid Nell is hardly the kind of person to accept a favour, but, at any rate, you shall get to know her if you like. She has a remarkable voice, as you will soon discover."

Eleanor's musical enthusiasm waked. "Oh, that is splendid! Then I can teach her, and she and I can come out together on the stage, and I will go about and accompany, and she shall make her fortune. That will be glorious. How jolly it will look on the bills!—'NELL CARRADUS'—very, very big, because they always make the most fuss about the singer, and then very small—'Eleanor Carradus, accompanist and solo piano.' Oh, and we should want a tenor in the troupe. Perhaps you could come, Mr. Ryder. Singing pays a great deal better than lawyering!"

"It is hardly kind to mock my trumpet tones," said Ryder, laughing. "I know you and Mary have often laughed over my attempts!"

"And I think," struck in Mary, "that you had better hurry off or the whole affair will fall through. You have quite enough work on hand to bring the Scarth up to the standard of the Moorshire Festival, without wasting a moment of practising time."

Meanwhile the proposed singers were awaiting the appearance of their conductor with keen interest. They had, of course, seen her at Ottarthwaite Park, but so far she had not been brought to the Mission, as on Sundays she went to the parish church with Catherine and the Vicarage party.

They were, therefore, now prepared to see what she was made of. At Ottarthwaite they had decided that she was simply a young lady. Pretty, of course, as an heiress should be, but "Nowt perticiler. Summut like these play fairies wi' her blue eyes and pink cheeks and gowlden hair."

Eleanor's personal appearance perhaps made this a fair impression; but no one can after all wrestle with and conquer any subject as Eleanor had done without being deepened and widened thereby; and no one could have passed through the discipline of pain, solitude, and poverty that had been Eleanor's lot without receiving a character power, ready to work itself out as the need arose.

That slight, golden-haired girl had fought her way to independence before the fortune arrived; but the Scarthsiders of course did not know that.

"Now, Mr. Ryder!" said she, in a low, quick voice, as they entered the schoolroom. "Tell me which they are."

There was a good representative number present. Catherine, engaged as accompanist, Maud, John Fleming, several school teachers, selected boys and girls, amongst whom Tom and Katie Benson had turned up smiling, and a number of men and girls.

Ryder led her along the room towards William Carradus, who was talking to Catherine. "William," said Ryder, "I think you know Miss Carradus. She wants to shake hands with you."

William put out his hard, stiff hand. "I'm pleased to meet you, miss. I hope as you're well?"

"Quite well, thank you, uncle William. You are my uncle, are you not?"

"Aye, miss, I'm your uncle. I was your father's brother, poor Dick! Well, well, he's gone to his account!"

"And where are my cousins?"

"Reuben and Jo do you mean, miss? They're yonder!" and he pointed with his finger to two straight, hearty-faced young men. "You see, miss, we've all heard tell as you're grand with the singing, Mr. Ryder here has telt us so. He came to our shop, and he says, 'William, you have to come and larn music,' and I says, 'What for?' and he says, 'Because I tell you, and there's the grandest teacher coming as will make you all look alive with your droning and steam-roller kind of music!' That's what he said, miss!"

Eleanor laughed. "Well, I hope you won't be disappointed, that's all! And where is Nell? Ah, I think I see her, I'll just slip across before we begin."

Nell, though chatting to Sarah Jameson, was furtively watching her cousin's movements, and pricing her red cloak.

"Eye, yon's Nell. She's a grand singer is Nell—t' best of t' lot!"

Ryder could not help admiring the simple self-possession of the girl, the instinctive courtesy of her manner, as she walked promptly across the room.

"Nell Carradus, I believe. We are cousins, so I hear. We ought to shake hands."

She put out her gloved hand almost eagerly.

Now naughty Nell had had fifty minds as to whether to lower herself by coming to the singing practice. It was only Catherine's sprightly insistence and her own powerful desire in the musical direction which had brought her, and she had confided to Sarah that "speak to yon heiress she wadn't. And if she tried to mistress it ower her she wad show her."

And Sarah had laughed pleasantly. "Why, Nell, thoo thinks a deal too mitch. Tek' t' pleasant things as comes, thoo's aulus frettin' ower somethin' or somebody!"

So Nell disregarded the outstretched hand and said quietly in her strongest accent, "Wha said as I was your cousin?"

Eleanor drew back a minute. "Oh, they told me at The Abbey. Why don't you want to shake hands?"

"Naá, I don't kna!"

Sarah jerked Nell indignantly, she felt vexed with her. And Nell could have shaken herself for her ungraciousness, but she could not bring herself to answering that childish smile, and she could not get over the red cloak and the white fur.

So she half put out her hand as a compromise, and Eleanor took it cordially for an instant.

"Miss Carradus," and Ryder came up, "I think they are all ready now." So the time was passed for private conversation, and when a general settlement had taken place Ryder got up and held forth in his usual impetuous earnest way.

He knew the Scarthsiders well. He was a favourite with them, for they respected his earnestness and took his chaff in good part. He was a Glyn, and that was in his favour, so he spoke with easy geniality, confident in being understood.

"Now then, my friends. We are settled at last. Trebles, altos, tenors, basses—a goodly company. Well, I won't keep you a moment; here we are all assembled to show what our beloved old Scarth can do when it sets itself. We all know, don't we, what they say about us in Farbiggin? They think we are only good for beer drinking and election fights. But we are determined to come out next spring—come out amongst the high and mighty of Moorshire—show that on the Scarth, in spite of our difficulties (and, my friends, I know some of them) we have a soul for music—a desire for culture and art. We are all going to join together for work. No shirking allowed, no jealousy. Mind that, you conceited tenors and basses over there. 'I'm a beautiful tenor myself, I've been told by those that should know.' Oh, you needn't all look as if you didn't understand. I have seen and heard some 'fratching' even in Mrs. Glyn's choir. I don't pretend to understand whether the trebles and altos work happily together, but I do know about the men. As for you children, order and obedience, or, though you sing like cherubs, you will get chucked out.

"But, honestly friends, steady, earnest work and patient work is required. We are not getting up an entertainment, we are trying for a prize. Let us deliver ourselves and our ideas over

into the hands of our conductor, who has come all the way from Germany for this special purpose. Most of us could really conduct better than she is going to do, and our ideas are probably more valuable, but as we can't help ourselves, let us drop our own notions for this winter, and rejoice that we are the only choir who has a lady from the land of music to instruct us. Let us work for her honour as well as our own, and whether we fail or win—and we can hardly expect to come out top the first year—still we shall have gained in steadiness of purpose, culture, and in having passed many a pleasant hour together."

"Hear, hear, Mr. Ryder!" came from many a voice in enthusiastic tones. "Thoo'll see, my lad, as t' Scarthsiders can sing as weel as them coountry lads and lasses. We'se show 'em!" called a voice.

"All right. We will! Now, Miss Carradus."

Eleanor rose. "I don't know if I have to make a speech, I hope not, but I should like to tell you that I have never conducted a choir before, but I have seen it done in Germany, and I'll do my very best. It is really very kind of you all to come. Mr. Glyn just now spoke as if I had been made in Germany, when all the time I'm half a Scarthsider. Never mind. Let's begin. Oh, and you won't mind my pulling you up, will you? I must, you know. It is part of the process. Yes, I think that's all I want to say." And then the first grind began.

Eleanor's shyness wore off as soon as she found herself deep in the music. Her charm of manner, and her little imperious decisiveness interested them. They wondered what she would do next, and her style of "pulling them up" partook of so much of the comical element that she warded off discontent. "Eh, lad, she hed tha yon time!" one would say to another on leaving the practice, "Eye, she kens her job does yon lass!" would be the tough acknowledgment.

The Scarthsiders knew well enough whether a man or a woman "kent their job," and Eleanor rose in their respect.

Still it was hard work—far harder than Eleanor had ever

conceived, and notwithstanding the manful aid given her by both Ryder and Catherine, she was often discouraged.

"I shall go into my grave over the struggle with the pitch and the tone, Mr. Ryder," she remarked disconsolately after an evening's battle.

"Oh, I hope not, Miss Carradus, don't worry over the thing. Besides, they listen to their own singing far, far better than they ever did, and the Scarth accent is really disappearing. It is indeed. The south country judges will soon be unable to pounce upon it."

On the very first night, of course, Eleanor discovered Nell's extraordinary gift, and as soon as ever the practice ceased she was wild to induce her to train.

"Nell, you must let me train you. You must, indeed."

"Why?"

"Oh, you must! Why, you have a most remarkable voice. You have indeed. Do let us try together to win the solo prize for Scarth!"

Nell's eyes glistened. She was better tempered now. The singing had cheered her.

"Naá, I don't kna!"

"Mr. Ryder, I want Nell to come to The Abbey and practise with me. Miss Glyn would not mind, would she?"

"Oh dear, no, Mary would be delighted!"

"Oh, then you will, won't you?"

"Naá, I don't kna!"

"I tell you," said Eleanor, "you must. You really must. I leave it to your conscience to refuse. Now let me see. The day after to-morrow. Would that do, or have you any other engagement?"

"Not as I know on." A smile crept to Nell's mouth at the idea of her having important engagements.

"Well, you know, an hour twice a week would do it, so mind you come. Oh, whatever the choir does, I'm bound to have success with you."

Nell made no promise, but she came, and she was well rewarded, for never had pupil more enthusiastic teacher.

Eleanor was delighted to find such material to work on. Though no great singer herself, she had had the best possible training, and it was joy indeed to work out her own knowledge through such a wonderful medium.

At first Nell was prepared to be stubborn and awkward to do with, and a stupid bashfulness came over her, but Eleanor's unlimited admiration for her voice, and her own delight in the power she felt within her, gradually thawed her, and before many evenings had passed Mary from her couch smiled to herself as she listened to the unconscious chatterings of the girls.

Perhaps Eleanor's greatest difficulty was in the matter of pronunciation.

Tenderly and with rare courtesy Eleanor approached the subject. But Nell saw instantly through all disguised suggestion.

"You mean as I speak too broad?"

"Well, you know, it is all right if we had a Moorshire judge, but I thought perhaps as the judge was coming from London——"

"I know, but I can learn, can't I?"

"Oh yes!" said the teacher tactfully. "You know, you have such a very musical ear, you will catch it up easily."

And from that hour Nell listened carefully to both Mary and Eleanor and patiently corrected her pronunciation not only in songs but in ordinary speaking until at last Mary yearned for the dear, racy dialect which Nell dropped the moment she entered the Abbey precincts.

Possibly some of the pains taken had another object in view. Why should she not show that she also could speak like a lady? It was not John Fleming of whom Nell was thinking at the moment.

But besides her own practical work, Eleanor found herself snapped up by the Competition Committee.

Miss Calthwaite was a great one in connection with the business arrangements, and as the winter advanced, and the new spring again gave promise of appearing, the Committees thickened.

Eleanor was often sent for to Calthwaite; and week by week Arthur Calthwaite, though carefully abstaining from laying himself open to any serious grind, encouraged anything which made pleasant opportunities for paying Eleanor his impressive attentions.

So the first trembling excitement Eleanor had felt in June had deepened perceptibly during the year, and nothing was now so intensely interesting as going to Calthwaite, and no social gaiety seemed complete if the Calthwaite party were not there.

On the Calthwaite side, no arrangement was, according to Arthur, properly arranged unless Miss Carradus could be included, and long, delightful riding and skating parties were arranged by the long-suffering Gertrude for the sole purpose of including Eleanor.

And Gertrude smiled to herself sometimes as she saw her brother nerving himself up for a winter's afternoon skate in order to pay attention to the fur-clothed, active little lady who, after her long experience of German winters, mocked at this English cold.

And Mary looked on in silence, and listened to Eleanor's chatterings about what was done at Calthwaite, and how sweet Mrs. Calthwaite was, and what a really nice person Miss Calthwaite seemed to be, without committing herself to much reply.

Certainly, all through the autumn and winter Eleanor keenly enjoyed Ryder's society. She was braced up by his active-mindedness; she became interested in his plans, she went to the "Green Dragon," and played many a time to the people assembled.

When, however, he preached total abstinence to her she mocked, "Of course I know spirit-drinking is abominable. We never thought anything of any one in Germany who drank Schnapps. But beer! Really, Mr. Ryder, I think it is a shame to take away the people's innocent happiness."

And Ryder would argue the matter hotly, and the argument was generally closed by Eleanor's becoming a little cross.

"You are stupid to get into those arguments with Eleanor," remarked Mary one day.

But Eleanor's crossness never lasted long; and when the fair weather arose again, she expected immediate interest in the concern over which she was at the moment enthusiastic.

It seemed as if Ryder were Eleanor's daily stand-by for pleasure and companionship, but Calthwaite was certainly her keen excitement. It was the thought of Prince Arthur that flushed her cheek. It was Prince Arthur she thought of in every poem she read, and in each love melody she played.

And Mary knew this, and Ryder knew this, but not a word was said at The Abbey to influence the girl.

But Catherine confided to her dear Harry the opinion that Mary was decidedly foolish.

"You see, Harry, any one can see that Arthur Calthwaite is after the infant, and it is also plain to be seen that Ryder is over head and ears. Then why should Mary be so indifferent?"

"I don't suppose, dear, they would wish in any way to try to catch Eleanor for the Glyn family. One has to remember the fortune."

"Well, that's what I think so stupid. Ruin a girl's happiness all for the sake of some ridiculous scruple of that sort. Calthwaite is a perfect puppy. Now you can't deny that, Harry!"

"He is a very charming man!"

"Rubbish! To see the man in church—pretending to be so pious—ugh! He is thoroughly taking that girl in. I like her better than I did; and somehow it seems to me that somebody or other ought not to allow it."

CHAPTER XXXI

FARBIGGIN was crowded for the Festival. The choirs, arriving in train loads from the surrounding villages of Moorshire, thronged the streets. Carriages paraded up and down the

narrow thoroughfares, the restaurants were crowded to their utmost limit, and the Concert Hall was a scene of immense activity. The hard-working Committee exerted themselves remorselessly—or rather some did and some didn't—and Catherine, Eleanor, Ryder, and Miss Calthwaite were amongst the number who did. And Arthur Calthwaite was amongst those who didn't.

Eleanor was wildly excited. She could hardly contain herself and her enthusiasm. It was so delicious to be bathed in music once more, and her choir were fairly satisfactory, and then she had high hopes for Nell.

The solos were sung on the first morning of the Festival. The body of the hall was reserved for competitors, but the gallery seats were taken by the audience. These latter were crowded with people, and the gay ladies, all decked out in spring grandeur, largely predominated. For after all, if they did not understand the music, they could at least show their hats, and that was always something. County people were there in large numbers. This was an occasion on which they shone forth to show the Farbiggin people themselves and all their bravery. There were gentlefolks amongst them—intelligent, quiet, refined—but the great object of many seemed to be to illustrate, by their ill-bredness and want of usually accepted manners, that they were different from the ordinary gentlemen and gentlewomen who made no pretensions.

What matter that the Bouncer party had only bought twelve tickets for fifteen people? Mrs. Bouncer and the Misses Bouncer expected the remaining three from somewhere.

A certain smart young clerk from Glyn's office, well instructed by the junior partner of that firm, had been installed as official door-keeper, and having had a breaking-in, in his rent-collecting experiences on the Scarth, he stuck to his guns gallantly, and finally caused the three extras of the Bouncer party to retire—thereby proving himself capable of winning a Victoria Cross should occasion arise; but the three retiring Bouncers explained to each other, and any one within hearing distance, that whoever that young man was,

he was both ill-bred and insolent; and the big Miss Bouncer said to her cousin, the Hon. Algernon Neatby, that really she did not know what the Committee were doing to allow such things.

But the Bouncer party had a further grievance, for having purchased their twelve tickets late, they were deeply hurt to find that the best places were occupied by those who had bought them in time—mere Nobodies—Farbiggin Nobodies

"Quite an absurd arrangement!" said Mrs. Bouncer very loud.

"A beastly rotten one!" pronounced Miss Bouncer. So the nobodies in front, during the lengthened competitions, became quite used to the monotony of the expressions of the younger Somebodies behind. The atmosphere was "beastly." That girl's hat was a "brute." The recent lunch was "rotten." The judge's tie was "ripping," and so on. But if you are Somebody, why not be ill-bred? It is your right! And if in London you would only touch the outside fringe of real society, why not show off in the country? If you look high enough you will never encounter the smiles of the Nobodies as they note your ingenious exhibition. Only in a generation or two do not blame the trend of the age if the Nobodies—better educated and better mannered—persist, as the botany books express it.

Maud, Polly, and Rob, resplendent in new white sailor hats, were in the front row, watching the animated scene in the hall with the keenest interest. As their mother, Uncle Ryder, and Maud were in a choir, they felt quite as if they belonged to the competition, and—joy of joys!—their grandfather had presented them all with dress circle tickets for the concert on the following day.

And Sir Matthew Preston was there, and Lady Preston and all their sallow-faced young daughters, the girls being further disguised in large mauve hats and orange flowers arranged in the height of the prevailing fashion. Sir Matthew did not care for music, but then he was the candidate, and all the country choirs were in attendance, and, besides, he was to

present the prizes at the concert; so he was affable and gracious, and hoped that he was making a good impression. Mrs. Bouncer was delightful to him. He was one of the few people whose heads she did not overlook.

Eleanor, with a white rosette of office, was flitting about below, and when the moment for the treble solos came she took her seat under the gallery, and her heart palpitated ridiculously.

Calthwaite, in spite of all there was to do, not finding anything exactly in his particular line, came strolling along, and, with a delighted smile, took his seat next to her.

"So your *protégé* is coming on?"

"Yes, and I'm frightfully excited!"

"What number?"

"She sings sixth!"

"That is a blessing; then she can hear some of the others first, and get her pluck up."

"Oh, Nell is not short of pluck!"

"Indeed?"

As each of the five singers retired, Eleanor breathed more freely. No one had as yet appeared to dash her hopes to the ground.

"No. 6, Miss Carradus!" said some one in the gallery.

"Very musical, isn't she?"

"Yes—been in Germany all her life. Why, that's not Miss Carradus!"

"Programme wrong!—that fiendish Committee again!" commented a spritely Miss Bouncer.

Nell came quietly forward, tall, composed, and overpoweringly handsome.

The introductory bars of the selected piece, and then Nell began—

"Cherry ripe, cherry ripe, ripe, I cry!"

Instant attention all over the hall. The gallery stops its incessant rustling, the judge looks up from his memorandum book.

Full and rich the notes came forth, simply and without the

least effort, and, as Nell felt the space of the hall, her voice grew larger, rounder, more lissom.

Eleanor sat breathless as each phrase, each intonation, each delicate turn rippled round the hall. There was just that simple yet ardent expression and rollicksome lightness that the piece required, and as Nell's voice died away at the words of merry but earnest entreaty, "Come and buy!" there was hardly a person in the hall who did not feel inclined to do it. Eleanor gave a great gasp of inward satisfaction, and Nell walked slowly off the platform without waiting for the round after round of applause that greeted her effort. Eleanor leaped to her feet.

"I must go to her!"

She hurried away behind the platform, and found Nell standing amongst some of the other competitors. She dragged her hastily aside.

"Nell, you angel! You were splendid—splendid! Oh, you must be first—you must, indeed! You did not sound a bit nervous. Oh, I am so happy!"

There was no doubt about the success. Miss N. Carradus was far ahead of the other competitors, and received a nice little compliment from the judge all to herself, and soon the Committee began to consult, with the result that Eleanor was deputed to ask Nell to sing the piece at the concert on the following day.

"Nell dear, such fun, and such an honour for us and the Scarth! They want you to sing it again at the concert! Oh, isn't it lovely! You must come back with me at once—there is nothing particular on just now—and we will tell Miss Glyn, and try something over in case of an encore!"

Nell could not help laughing at her teacher's enthusiasm.

"Do you think I should?"

"Should what?"

"Why, sing?"

"Sing—why, of course!" and Eleanor opened her blue eyes to their greatest extent. "Why, my dear girl, it's an immense honour; and think what the Scarth will say!

Why, we shan't mind if we fail altogether to-morrow with the choir!"

Nell was in a dream. The joy of having felt her voice in the great hall, the knowledge that Calthwaite had witnessed her success, the congratulations of friends, the flattering request of the Committee and this cousin's delight, seemed so unreal, so far removed from the life she knew. So when Eleanor pressed her further, she followed her with meekness, delivering herself over to fate, and together they told the delighted Mary of their success.

"I'll tell you what we'll have for an encore!" said Eleanor as they stood by Mary's couch. "We'll have Miss Glyn's song!"

Mary laughed. "Nonsense, Eleanor!"

"Oh no, it is not really nonsense—we will. It will be lovely; I am so glad I thought of it. It is quite new, and every one will be delighted—I know they will, and Nell takes that high 'C' so deliciously."

Mary often wrote poetry and songs for her own pleasure, and this particular one consisted of some words she had written expressing what she imagined Rubenstein meant when he wrote his popular Romanze in E flat.

She had presented them with some amount of actual shyness to Eleanor one day, and Eleanor had been instantly charmed, and had promptly set to work to arrange the accompaniment, and she had already taught Nell the song.

"I'd like to sing Miss Mary's song better than anything!" said Nell. "I'd do my best not to spoil it!"

"Well, dear, of course I should be delighted, and greatly honoured. Oh dear, it will make me want to go to the concert more than ever!"

"Happen I shan't get an encore after all!" and Nell laughed.

"Of course you are bound to, with all the Scarth up in the back of the gallery!" laughed Eleanor. "Come along, now—begin at once!" So together they practised until the excited teacher was satisfied.

"And, Nell, mind you put in plenty of expression—passion, if you like; wail it out when the time comes. Forget everything—everything but the song!"

"I suppose," said Eleanor as Nell prepared to go—"I suppose it is all right about your frock. You don't mind my asking, do you?" she added hastily; "only I thought perhaps I might lend——"

Nell appreciated the kindly thought, and took the suggestion as it was meant.

"I'm all right, I think. My Aunt Janet gave me a frock for the Primrose Ball. I suppose that will do?"

"Oh, that will be lovely!"

"I've gloves and everything!" said Nell, looking down at her hands.

"That's all right, then!" said Eleanor.

And before night it was all over the Scarth that Nell had won, and was going to sing at the Grand Concert. Hearty and characteristic congratulations came pouring in from every cottage, and there was a hurried rush for tickets for the night. As for the members of the choir, they were exultant that one of their number should have conquered, and were inspired to try and do more than their best, now that they had such a champion among them. The second day was one of terrible work for the Committee. Ryder especially, upon whom so much of the working arrangements concentrated themselves, was rushed from morning to night—had not, in fact, even time to dress for the concert.

Calthwaite strolled round and elegantly surveyed the proceedings in his usual gentlemanly manner, and noticed little matters which he decided to bring before the Committee another year. And Gertrude, who was apparently occupied the whole day in chasing the choir who had to sing next, lost patience with him altogether.

The Scarth Choir had to compete in a class with new choirs and smaller village choirs only. The moment came at last for them to show what they and their conductor were made of.

"The right Miss Carradus at last," said some one to Arthur Calthwaite, as Eleanor took up her position.

"And there is that wonderful treble again," passed from one to another.

A round of applause greeted their rendering, and it was over.

"Well, Miss Carradus?" inquired Fleming, white with nervous anxiety.

"Very good—very good!" said Eleanor, but her brow was puckered. "I hope it is all right. Attack, *esprit*, and pitch were awfully good; but tone—— Well, we shall see."

And Eleanor's diagnosis was a correct one. The Scarth choir came out second, giving way before a small village choir which had competed in this class for several years.

But, after all, they might have done worse, as they remarked to each other, and they were delighted with themselves. Catherine and Ryder and Maud cheered up the rest, and really they needed no cheering, but retired home to tell the news bursting with conceit and satisfaction.

As for Polly and Rob, they could not express their satisfaction in sufficiently appropriate language, nor their contempt for the performance of the winning choir.

"You'll let me take you home after the concert, Nell?" asked Fleming, as they walked up the street after the competition.

"Eye, happen?" she replied.

"I want to speak to you, Nell," he said seriously.

"Well, speak!"

"Oh, not now, but perhaps to-night."

Nell blushed—actually blushed.

"You'd best not speak to me, John Fleming; I'se nut worth your speaking to!" and she turned up the entry towards her Scarth home.

Poor Fleming! He was certainly suffering deeply at this time. His temporal affairs were prospering. His master, Mr. Fell, could not speak in high enough terms of his talent and aptitude for his business, and now, having learnt all that Mr.

Fell could teach him, he was preparing to return to his own village to go forward by himself.

He had made the most of the educational advantages of Farbiggin, and now held the highest South Kensington certificates for botany and allied sciences, and his excellent draughtsmanship made him the envy of his fellow-students at the Art School.

He was bending his best energies to the production of new varieties in both plants and vegetables with considerable success, and his ambition was to enter into the cultured side of his business. In fact, young Fleming was considered by those who knew him to be a rising man, and, as his master remarked, if he had only had capital he might have made his fortune; but, in any case, he was bound to make his name. Yet all this success was as nothing without Nell. He had worked so long for Nell; had dreamed of Nell; had accustomed himself to view his life entirely in relation to Nell; had planned out his country life of practical and original work with Nell—racy, intelligent Nell—as his companion.

He had disregarded all her disadvantages—courted her in misery—courted her in rags—courted her cross—courted her angry—courted her merry—had perceived the jewel in the rough, and felt that he deserved his reward.

Probably he had been too self complaisant—too secure in his superiority. He had prided himself, without realising it, on his wonderful insight in choosing Nell. He felt himself her superior, had meant to lift her to his level, and had then meant that they should both rise together.

And now it seemed hard. The position was changing daily. It was he himself now who seemed to be the poor one. He possessed the disadvantages, and Nell—his proud, beautiful Nell—was rising, rising away out of his sight.

Oh, he was no fool. Nell was going night after night to The Abbey; she was learning manners and refinements. Why, even her very speech was different. And here she was being taken up by the Festival Committee; was mixing with ladies. And Nell was clever—oh, he knew that.

He had reckoned on that when he chose her to rise with him; and now Nell was evidently setting her mind far beyond a country florist—far beyond the home in the country amongst the flowers.

It seemed he had been working for nothing. He must begin all over again. Begin again! The great pain clutched his heart, for he knew that he could never begin again. It was Nell—Nell he wanted, and only Nell.

But, at any rate, he must know. He could not make her out. There was something on her mind—of that he was certain. In the old days she had been off and on playing with him, but he had known that, after all, he was the favourite. He had felt sure of his ground, though it might be rough and thorny.

But now it was different. She avoided him—definitely avoided him. She did not look him in the face; that was so unlike the old naughty Nell who laughed her insolent nonsense right into his very eyes.

The ground was sinking indeed beneath his feet when Nell would not look him in the face. So as he was leaving Farbiggin he was determined that she should hear him.

CHAPTER XXXII

The Great Hall was packed from floor to ceiling, and the vast combined choirs rose tier upon tier at the back of the huge platform which had advanced far into the body of the ground floor. Everybody was there. The music went well. The hall grew hotter and hotter, but nobody seemed to mind at all.

The industry of the choirs, and the devotedness of the choirmasters and mistresses down the length and breadth of Moorshire, showed itself most creditably in the spirited rendering of the various works and choruses; whilst the combined orchestral societies, aided by a little outside professional talent, were a strong feature of the evening.

Singers from London came down in all the glory of their names and their posters to lift the proceedings; and, arrayed in their second-best clothes kept for the provinces, they looked around with kindly condescension as the local soloist, Miss N. Carradus, made her appearance.

Nell and Eleanor came on together—Nell in the primrose and white, and Eleanor looking fair and golden in a simple black lace.

The gallery greeted Nell's appearance with tumultuous rapture, and below in the dress circle many faces looked up at the tall, well-built girl with surprise and admiration.

Sir Matthew Preston, from his place beside his wife on the platform, shivered slightly, then pulled himself together and listened with the rest. "Cherry ripe, cherry ripe, ripe I cry," rang out the fresh, clear voice as it had done the previous day, only to-night there was an added confidence, a playful, dashing buoyancy which took the audience by storm.

The eyes in the gallery gazed at the singer entranced. The Scarthsiders were preparing their hands to break into applause at the first possible moment: even the soloists turned sideways to survey the singer.

Nell had her success—overwhelming, delightful, intoxicating; and Eleanor's eyes fairly danced with happiness as she followed her from the platform.

"You must go back, Nell—quick, go back! Bow to them. No, don't look fierce like that—smile. Quick, mind you smile!"

Nell turned and did as she was told, and the audience clapped again louder than before; and the gallery broke into shrill whistling and heavy stamping.

Ryder appeared suddenly from the back.

"Quick, Nell, go on again. Don't waste time; give them an encore; they won't be satisfied without."

So Nell went quickly forward and sang Mary's song. The words exactly followed the original air, and Eleanor's accompaniment but slightly modified Rubenstein's arrangement.

"Dead leaves are falling fast,
And autumn winds are sighing,
The sun is overcast
And swallows south are flying.
But O, my Love and I,
What care we for the weather?
No storm can sweep the sky
When we are both together!
While seasons come and go,
While oceans ebb and flow,
So long as day and night gladdest course shall run
No other heart can know,
No other heart can know,
The love and power that binds our lives in one.

"Dread Winter fills the air,
The stars are dim with weeping,
The world is dark with care
And Summer flowers are sleeping.
But where, my Love, art thou?
But where, my Love, art thou?
But where, my Love, art thou?
But where, my Love, art thou?
Lost, lost, lost, lost.
My Love, my Darling, is gone, is gone,
My Love, My Darling, is gone, is gone,
Is gone, is gone for ever,
Is gone, is gone for ever;
My Darling! My Darling! My Love is gone!"

Throughout the song Nell held the audience with her strong, subdued passion, and at the last "Darling" she lifted her voice to the high "C" with a consummate ease, which spread wonder over the faces of the people. It was a marvellous performance, and the audience showed clearly that they felt it to be so.

Even as the last whisper reached the far gallery Nell turned, and turning she caught sight of Fleming up amongst the tenors, and she was suddenly shocked at his white, miserable face, and after she had answered again and again to the recalls, she took her place amongst the Scarth choir most unreasonably perturbed.

At the right moment Sir Matthew came forward, very self-possessed, to all outward appearances, to fulfil his office as

prize distributor. His wife sat beside him, elegant, well dressed, and tired.

Sir Matthew made the usual speech, congratulated the prize winners, consoled the losers by telling them that all could not win, complimented the Committee, thanked the subscribers, and glorified Moorshire.

Nell of course received another wonderful ovation on receiving her prize. And no one but Sir Matthew on the platform, and Dr. Maddison in the audience, appreciated the consummate coolness of the girl as she took the prize and, pausing for a moment, looked the prize-giver quietly in the face.

Eleanor, when she went up for the Scarth prize, found difficulty in controlling herself, and hurried across the platform in a manner almost undignified, quite disregarding the applause of the audience.

As the crowded hall emptied itself into the street, it seemed quite impossible for any one to find any one else. But Calthwaite managed to push up against Nell as she was struggling in the crush. He whispered something, and nodding she passed on with a curious expression on her face—half pleasure, half perplexity.

Fleming did not seem to be at hand, so Nell argued that she had better go straight home; therefore, without looking round, she hurried off.

"Good-night, Nell," came the cheery voice of Dr. Maddison.

Nell stopped a moment.

"Excellent, my dear, excellent, I must congratulate you. All the same, keep cool, Nell, keep cool!"

Nell felt a trifle vexed. Why should Dr. Maddison think that she could not take care of herself. This was the second time he had warned her.

"Oh, I'm all right, Dr. Maddison," she retorted, laughing. But there was not quite the old mirthfulness in the laugh.

"Are you? Well, keep all right, Nell. Keep all right! Good-night!"

When she arrived home she found, as she expected,

that her mother was out, and the children were romping about noisily.

She made short work with the children, for she was tired, and she therefore bundled them upstairs to bed in less than no time, regardless of their entreaties to examine her costume still more closely. She had hardly put out the bedroom candle, and returned to the kitchen, before there was a knock at the outer door.

"Come in!" she called, looking into the narrow passage.

Fleming entered.

"Jack!"

"May I come in?"

"Why, eye!"

He shut the outer door and came forward.

"Will you sit down, Nell?"

He looked at her as she stood there, such a contrast of bright youthfulness in the dingy little kitchen. She looked up at him and laughed half nervously.

"Why, what's up?"

"It is I, Nell, who ought to ask you what is up?"

"What for?"

"Do you mind sitting down, Nell dear?"

He spoke quietly, almost dully.

She sat down by the fire, and lifting her white gloves from the table began to smooth them out on her knee. Fleming sat down opposite her, and again quietly examined this glorified Nell.

"I want to talk to you, Nell. You need not speak unless you like. I want one last talk with you, to tell you what I have to tell you."

Nell did not look up, she merely continued her effort on the gloves.

"Of course, Nell, you know that I love you—love you with all my heart, with every bit of my nature, and to-night I want to ask you to be my wife—my wife; you understand, Nell dear?" But the girl made no movement. "You know, Nell, I can't offer you wealth or station. I can offer you myself as I am.

I am getting on, Nell, and I will get on. At first we could have a little cottage near my work, and afterwards, dear, when I have made my way, we could move into a house I know—a house I have often looked at, outside the village. I always think of you and that house together. You could have all the roses you wanted there, Nell, you could be almost a lady!" Still the smoothing process continued on those white gloves. "But to-night, dear Nell, I want you to promise to marry me, to promise to share my life—for better for worse—I have waited such a long time, Nell."

"You needn't go on, Jack."

"But I shall, Nell. No, sit down!" for she half rose. "Sit down, you shall hear me. How dare you try to stop me!" but he rose himself. "What have I done, Nell, that you should cast me off? Have I ever changed to you? Haven't I courted you, and worked for you? Have I ever bothered you, Nell? Have I not tried to please you in every possible way? Tell me, Nell, what is wrong? Why are you so different?"

"It's no good. Oh, Jack, do shut up!"

"Nell dear, for God's sake don't play with me any more. Give me your answer. Let us settle it. Come, do!" He put his hand on her arm lightly, and if Nell had looked up then she might have been distressed at his face of awful anxiety.

"Oh, do go, Jack. It's no good!"

"Why is it no good, Nell?" He looked down at her. She was trembling, but her face was set.

"Nell!" he cried; and there was a deep broken-heartedness in his tone. "Oh, Nell, there isn't some one else?"

"And if there is?" she returned defiantly.

He lifted his hand from her arm quickly, as if the warm, soft flesh beneath the delicate muslin burnt him.

"Then, of course, it is over. Good-night, Nell. I have never forced myself on you yet, and I won't do it now. Good-night!" He turned and left her.

She leaped up as she heard the door close quietly behind

him. If he had seen the look of undecided misery on her face he might have returned.

"Jack, Jack!" cried her heart, but her lips were sealed, and she sat down again. She took up the white gloves; they were entirely ruined now—crushed to death. Nell threw them passionately into the fire. The joy of the evening's success faded. She wished that Jack would not make such scenes. She hated making other people miserable. She had a perfect right to do as she liked. But Nell's conscience allowed her no rest. "Traitor, traitor!" it whispered, and she tossed long and wearily before falling into her restless sleep.

And poor Jack that night, in his little room over the shop, sobbed forth—

"It's a judgment—a judgment on me. She's not a Christian—at least—— But oh, my God, my God, I can't give her up—I can't. Give her to me, dear Lord. Oh, let me have her. O God, for the sake of all the love in Thy great heart, give me Nell!"

It was not likely that Eleanor should sleep soundly that night. Her nerves were all tingling with the strain of the festival, and the magic of the music. Round and about her over-excited brain, the harmonies and the melodies in which she had lived and breathed for the past few days ran riot, and above all was the crowning sense that at last "Die Liebe" had found her. She was quite sure now that she had found die Liebe.

Lover-like whispers, insinuating tenderness, almost caressing smiles had been her portion for long; and during the last two days, through all her activities, through all her agitations, she had been conscious of her handsome Prince Arthur, so ready with his attentions, so active on her behalf, so pleased with her success.

And to-night he had spoken nothing very definite, but enough; and she could not now be mistaken. Die Liebe had come, and she was happy. Oh, it was all too exciting. No wonder she could not sleep. And the great Mother Moon, ascending high behind the old castle ruins up into the starlit

sky, smiled down kindly upon the figure in the bright, warm dressing-gown, nestling into the wide window-seat. And the glamour was over all.

And the fourth person who could not sleep that night was one to whom die Liebe had indeed come with force and strong pain; but there was no glamour, no magic, no happiness; only a dull, helpless sense of misunderstanding, failure, and mortification. So Ryder Glyn also watched the moon; and she mocked him with a placid coldness, so he drew his curtains to hide her impudent face.

CHAPTER XXXIII

WHEN on the night of the concert Calthwaite had whispered to Nell the words, "Windy Scar," he had hardly made up his mind what he really intended to do. It annoyed him to find himself in the dilemma of wanting two things at the same time, the possession of either of which might ruin his chances for the other.

Calthwaite passed for an easy-going, shallow-hearted man, but the fact was that underneath his apparent easy-goingness there was a strong undercurrent of dogged self-will.

Calthwaite was better described as temporary-hearted, for there was no shallowness in his determination to get what he wanted. What he desired he desired intensely, though the wish lasted but for one hour, and it was difficult to guess from his gracious, flattering manner what a depth of selfishness lay hidden below the surface.

From his earliest years Calthwaite had considered life from the point of view of his own comfort and pleasure. He never denied himself anything he could comfortably obtain, and even his own inveterate laziness and self-indulgence gave way before a strong desire.

There was no doubt that he liked Eleanor extremely. She thoroughly amused him, not only by her own irrepressible

vivacity, but by her evident enjoyment of his attentions. And of course she possessed £100,000.

Now though he himself wanted for nothing, and his mother's abundant income was at his free disposal, he felt that it would be a great advantage to marry money.

It has been well said that selfishness is merely cruelty asleep, and when Calthwaite, sitting in the stalls at the concert, again beheld Nell in her glory, he boldly satisfied his eyes with her beauty, and felt himself personally gratified by her abundant success. It was impossible to resist the long habit of years to reach out his hand for what he wanted; so, though Eleanor was seated in full view at the piano, though he looked with an almost proprietary glance at her eager, piquant face, all radiant with smiles over her cousin's success, yet, that night, it was Nell whom Calthwaite desired to conquer—Nell in her fresh, buoyant beauty, who called up the stormy desire in his heart. He was charmed with the girl. Why should he not enjoy her? A walk with Nell would be worth having, and after all she was but a tobacco girl.

He was determined to settle down properly some time with Eleanor, but it would amuse him to have a final fling, and the future could take care of itself. Life had never dared to be hard on him yet, and as far as the girl was concerned she must take her chance. Besides, he had not forgotten Nell's first insolent manner towards him. He was gratified that apparently she was now taking him seriously; for she had shown in the sundry encounters he had had from time to time with her that she was not oblivious to his attentions.

A certain spice of pure revenge entered into his reasoning, so he had whispered "Windy Scar" to Nell, and was almost surprised at his own easy success when Nell bestowed upon him her answering nod.

Windy Scar is the place of all others for the sunset glories. It is a joy to walk up over the fell and breathe in the breezy air, and walk on and on over the loose, musical limestones, as if the goal were the very glowing sky itself. Then there comes the sudden pause, the astonishing, entrancing break, as the fell

descends in a mighty scar some hundreds of feet in depth. Far below lie the hazel woods and pheasant covers, and the wide level peat mosses with their black patches of piled-up peats, and turfy land, and narrow ditches which the sun tracks out in lines of sparkling light. To the left in the far distance lie the yellow sands with their traces of silvery water, and to the right and far in front the everlasting hills. The peaceful, calm, lonely heights looking down into the darkening valleys from their sun-tipped summits.

And on such an evening Calthwaite and Nell wandered along over the short turf and the singing stones.

Equal in height, the dark, intense-looking girl and the fair, nonchalant gentleman made an interesting couple.

Nell was excited. It was pure excitement that had brought her—determined, dogged excitement. A desire to know had seized her—an overpowering yearning to take of the fruit of the tree. She wanted to see what this gentleman meant, to risk something for the mere joy of the risk.

Her recent successes were taking effect. Nell was no longer the old Nell. She felt confident that her beauty, her voice, her very self had conquered—that she, Nell Carradus, was a real queen—was able to subdue a kingdom—that others beside 'bacca lads and florists were ready to lie at her feet. She felt she could draw back any moment. There was no danger to her. She would like to try.

So here she was out on the lonely fell with her lover. This time a real gentleman—one who had chosen Nell Carradus as his companion from amongst all the women of his acquaintance.

This afternoon there was none of the nervousness which beset the old Nell that day after the Ottarthwaite school treat. She was confident that she had caught a glimpse inside the magic doors of society, and that the lover at her side was to be her guide further into the entrancing world.

Calthwaite knew his power well. He treated the girl with his most deferential courtesy, put out his hand to help her over the rough places, aided her through the narrow Moor-

shire stiles, listened as she talked, and flattered her by his whole manner.

"It was so very good of you to come this afternoon, Miss Nell!"

"Was it?"

"Oh, yes. It is not many girls who would take so much trouble for me, and after your great success too. Miss Nell, I really must tell you that you were superb—magnificent. Every one was charmed, and I was so proud—oh, so proud of my beautiful Nell!"

He pressed her arm tentatively, and the glamour was in his voice and the glamour was in his eyes, and Nell wondered—wondered.

"I'm not a lady!"

"You could be anything you chose, Nell!"

His voice was very seductive, and Nell, remembering the recent past, believed him.

"Do you really think so?" She looked up into his face, and her eyes shone with an almost pathetic beauty.

"I tell you, Miss Nell, if you gave yourself up to me—to my love—I would shield you and care for you, and you should be all my own. You should want for nothing—nothing, Miss Nell. Why, with a voice like yours you might have the world at your feet. Let me share the delight of your triumph? I will give you all the training you need. I will help you and pay for you——"

Nell tried to interrupt him at the last word. Her independence rose.

"Nonsense, Nell, dear. I am a great deal older than you. Of course I should pay for you, and we will have no more tobacco factories, no more hard work—nothing but music and happiness, and you shall be my own beautiful queen. Why, Nell, the whole country-side is talking of your beauty and your voice!"

"I thought that you were courtin' my cousin Eleanor."

"Courting the girl who wronged you?" At the moment Calthwaite threw Eleanor far back into oblivion. "Why,

Nell, as far as I can judge it is this very Miss Eleanor who has benefited by your grievous misfortunes. She may have the miserable gold—be a partaker in this gigantic injustice, but really, Nell, could you imagine yourself and Miss Eleanor on the same platform? So Nell is jealous, is she?"

Again he looked down earnestly at his companion's glowing cheeks. Nell walked forward silently. Could he really mean——

"You see, Nell dear, I only want to know if you love me—really love me with all your heart, as I love you! Love me enough to throw your life in with mine—to be mine alone! Will you come to me, dear? Don't disappoint me!"

His voice was low and had a peculiarly soft richness.

How lovely the evening was! They were nearing the edge of the Scar, and the sun was still well above the horizon.

"I don't know what you mean," was Nell's subdued answer.

"Oh yes, dear, you do! I mean what I say. Give me your love as you have mine."

Nell's breath came quickly and pantingly. Again she questioned within herself what this man really meant.

"You know I have loved you ever since I first saw you!"

Calthwaite had now become so absorbed with his immediate desire that every thought but that of gaining his present wish had fled from him.

"Have you?"

"You know I have. Why, my darling, how could I help it? You are the most beautiful woman in all Moorshire!"

Nell looked up at her companion critically.

"Still afraid?" Again the perilously tender voice.

Nell was silent, but she looked at him with eyes full of a strange light. Distrust was fast ebbing away. Surely, surely, if truth were ever spoken in this world it was being spoken to her now.

He saw acquiescence in her face, and he took his advantage instantly, triumphantly.

"Now, Nell—now you are mine!" and he looked at her

with eyes aflame with strong desire, and gathered her into his arms.

"Let us sit down, dear," he said softly.

He led her to the sloping bank of short turf, from which they could look down on to the little wood that came creeping up the face of the Scar.

Then it was true—quite true. It was not a dream. She, Nell Carradus of the Scarth, was after all going to marry a gentleman.

As for Calthwaite, he thought that he had won more easily than he could have dared to hope.

"Well, she shall not lose by me," he thought; "I will do well by her."

"You know, Nell dear, this is a little secret between us. I trust you and you trust me. Fate meant us for each other, so we must follow her, must we not?"

"Do you mean that you want to be wed at once?"

"Ah! well, we need not worry about weddings yet; it is early days. The great thing to think of now is that we love each other, you and I. Look Nell!" and he drew from his waistcoat pocket a sparkling diamond ring. "I have it all ready, you see," and he took her hand and placed it on her wedding finger. "Now you cannot escape. You are mine—mine," and he pressed her passionately to him.

Nell did not draw back from the embrace, she was consumed with the wonder of it. She looked down at the ring. She had never dreamed of such a treasure. Yet there it was sparkling on her own hand.

"This will be somethin' to show Miss Mary and my cousin Eleanor," she said, with a shy laugh.

Calthwaite started. "Now, Nell," he said seriously, "you are mine now, and you must do exactly as I tell you. I cannot have our little secret told. I shall be angry, really angry with you, my darling, if you let out our secret."

The least touch of control always put Nell on her mettle.

"But Eleanor has done a deal for me, and she'd be glad to

know as you are goin' to marry me. She'll be glad as I'se goin' to be a lady!"

"Yes, yes, my sweet; but all the same I don't want it known just yet. I have not made my arrangements—do you understand?"

Calthwaite was alarmed. He seemed to have gone too far. It was all very well to make this girl think he was going to marry her in order to gain his temporary pleasure, but there was a reasonableness in things. He must not have her proclaiming throughout the Scarth that he was going to marry her. The idea was preposterous.

He had thought it would be quite easy to explain to the girl what he meant. He had, in fact, imagined that she would have understood intuitively. She could never really imagine that he actually intended marriage. Yet now, face to face with her on the Scar, he felt it extremely difficult to put the position in a reasonable light.

In the quiet, bewildered Nell before him, seated so happily on the grass admiring the ring he had given her, there was little to distinguish her from any lady of his own circle. That very style and pose which had at first attracted him was now in evidence as a barrier to his present explanation.

Calthwaite found himself seized with sudden diffidence. The wild idea passed again through his mind about King Cophetua and the beggar maid. Why not? But he cast it aside with inward ridicule. She must be content with what many another woman has been content with. But how was he to put it reasonably to Nell? That was the point.

She laid her hand on his knee with her old caressing charm.

"You do really mean it all, Mr. Calthwaite? You are not takin' me in?"

How could he lie in her pure face? How could he withstand her womanly power?

"Nell, Nell, my darling, what do you mean?"

She looked at him earnestly. Something in his voice sobered her.

"I mean you are treatin' me as you would treat a lady?"

Again Nell brought out the ambitious word—the pathetic climax of all her hopes.

"My darling, to-night we are only thinking of love—love. What is social position when there is love?"

She gave a sigh of relief. It seemed to be all right. He was playing fair. Still, she made one more effort after certainty.

"Promise me marriage, Mr. Calthwaite! Here is my hand!" She put out her work-worn hand with the air of a princess.

Calthwaite hesitated. He had some faint feeling against absolutely perjuring himself in so many words. He really must explain. Why on earth did not the girl see without all this fuss?

He took her hand between his, gently, and smiled into her eyes.

"We can discuss marriage any time, dear. Let us think of the present happiness. People can be very happy together without marriage." He looked at her calmly, watching the effect of his words. But Nell drew back.

"But you don't mean by that, that——"

"I mean, dearest, that—surely you understand what I mean?—what I want, my darling? Come, don't look like that! Why, what's the matter?"

"Do you mean that you want Nell Carradus without marriage?"

"Nell, dear, really you are extremely troublesome!" he said reproachfully; and he tried to make his voice sound playful. "It hurts me to see you so suspicious. I don't believe you love me at all!"

But Nell knew now—knew all there was to know. Like a storm the wild remembrances rushed upon her—remembrances of others who had trusted half promises, others who had dreamed of bliss, and awaked in anguish. Even as she sat here the vision of Jane Ann Martin, wild and agonised, rose before her view. The ground seemed to sink away beneath her. Her head swam. She staggered from the ground. Calthwaite rose with her, knowing that the battle had come.

"Arthur Calthwaite, look at me! In the light of yon sun swear that you'll wed me!"

He looked at her and smiled condescendingly—patiently as if he were tired of the subject; as if she were a petted child.

The smile irritated her to madness. With a bound she turned into Nell of the Scarth.

"Then by God and the divil, ger oot o' my seet!" she cried. "I'se done with tha!"

"Nell! Nell!" He rushed at her and seized her by the shoulder. "Nell Carradus, what do you mean? You are mine—mine. You have promised yourself to me!" And he planted a long, passionate kiss on her cheek with an almost savage strength.

Nell leaped back to the extreme edge of the Scar.

"You dare!" she cried. "I'se leap ower Scar rather than let tha tooch ma, thoo sneakin' villin!"

There she stood clearly outlined against the sky—Beauty infuriate. He looked at her in undisguised admiration.

"Nell! Nell!" he cried appealingly. "Remember you are mine. Remember the ring!"

She had forgotten the ring for the moment. Quick as thought she drew it from her finger, and threw it with all her force into his face. It cut his cheek deeply; and the blood spouted forth.

"Theer!" she mocked. "Noo thoo's getten enough. Thoo'll remember t' 'Bacca Queen for life noo, Arthur Calthwaite."

Suddenly she started and listened attentively. Calthwaite stooped and picked up the ring. Then he carefully put his handkerchief to his cheek, and advanced calmly towards her.

"Be off!" she stormed. "Be off! Theer's folk comin' oop t' Scar from t' wood!"

Calthwaite could not control a scared look crossing his face as he turned on his heel and walked quickly away.

She threw after him a mocking laugh; and then reseated herself, and watched as her sometime lover strode over the fell until he was hidden from view by a dip in the ground.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE voices in the wood sounded clearer. Happy children's voices they seemed to be.

"Be quick, Rob! Don't dawdle so, or we shall have brought Miss Carradus all the way for nothing. The sun is nearly gone!"

"Polly, what a fidget you are! Why, he's at least two inches off the top of the hill yet!"

Nell sat quite still trying with all her might to control herself. She was literally shaking with suppressed excitement. The blood was galloping through every pulse, her temples were throbbing madly, yet her cheeks were colourless.

There was more laughing—more sound of scrambling feet and falling stones, and then she heard Eleanor say cheerfully: "Come along! Why, I am a far better climber than you two!" And in another moment she appeared with the two girls following her up the little rocky path that struggled upwards from the wood below.

"Why, Nell, you here!" exclaimed Eleanor in astonishment.

Nell rose. "T' sun's grand!"

"Yes, we have come all the way to wish him good-night. The children brought me a round-about way by the road. They thought it would be more fun to come up the Scar. It has been a scramble."

"It's awfully jolly now we are here!" said Rob, flinging herself down on the ground in order that she might pant with more comfort, and she removed her hat to let the wind play with her tumbled hair. Polly followed her example, and exclaimed in a dogmatic manner, "Now, Miss Carradus, you cannot say that you have ever seen anything more glorious even in Germany!"

Eleanor laughed. "I knew you would ask that! I was certain you would want me to confess to your wonderful English superiority. I call it distinctly dishonourable to press

the point when I am in such a hopeless minority. Even Nell here will be on your side in upholding Moorshire beauties. Not but what I am the only person present really competent to give an opinion, for I alone have seen both countries!"

She looked up at Nell laughingly and doing so she noticed the white, excited face.

"Why, Nell, dear, what is it? What is the matter?"

"Oh, now't particular!"

"Nonsense, Nell, you can't take me in, you know!"

But Nell turned her head away resolutely and studied the view. Eleanor sat down for a few minutes and kept up a lively but rather random chatter with Polly and Rob until the sun descended Rob's two inches, and was lost to Moorshire for another night.

"If you two would not mind running on in front," said Eleanor suggestively, "then I could talk to Nell!"

"You mean you want a little private conversation?" asked Polly.

"Well, you know two is company, and if you don't mind?"

"Oh, we are not at all offended, are we, Rob? We know about grown-up people wanting private conversations. We are quite used to being shut out of the room when mother wants to talk to Aunty Mary."

"I never can imagine what they find to say in their confabulations," commented Rob.

"Oh, well, come along. Stick on your hat, Rob!" and away they ran over the fell in the direction of Farbiggin.

"Now, Nell!" said Eleanor. "We must be quick, or we shall lose sight of those terrible children."

Nell turned. She must get home somehow. She might as well take advantage of the present company.

"Well, what is it?"

"Nowt!"

"Don't lie, Nell. I'm your cousin. You had better say it out!"

"I kna as you are my cousin, but you're nobbut a bit of a

lass. You kna nowt aboot what bothers workin' lasses like me!"

Eleanor had not heard Nell talk in her own dialect for some long time, and she was puzzled.

"I'm nearly two years older than you anyhow," she declared. The idea of her own incompetence amused her. "Come now, don't be grumpy."

"Happen you are! But then you're a lady—you hev your awn fortune. You can't understand such things as comes to such as me!"

"I can understand far more than you think, Nell!"

And before her companion could stop her she took her arm. She was shocked at the girl's appearance, and seeking about hastily in her own mind for the best way of bringing her comfort, it struck her that a little confidence on her own part might lead to something from Nell.

"Listen, Nell. Perhaps I know far more than you think," and as they walked together Eleanor narrated to Nell some of her own German experiences, admitted her share of troubles, described her distresses, her sorrows, her loneliness, her poverty. "Why, Nell, do you know my mother and I nearly starved, and your grandfather never sent his son a penny."

This was news to Nell, and she began to regard this cheerful little well-dressed figure at her side in a new light.

"Is it a money trouble, Nell? That is a trouble I understand right down to the very bottom. You know I am quite, quite determined to help you if you will let me. You cannot consider the way things are arranged a greater shame than I do."

"I don't want your brass!"

"Don't you? Then tell me what the trouble is. Can I help you in some other way—there must be something wrong. I've never seen you look like you look to-night in my life."

"Well, any road it's not brass!"

Eleanor waited patiently.

"It's naá use. You can't understand—you lile lady lass! You were niver courted and tricked, and med to feel as if you

were a bit o' wasted womankind as any man as hed a mind might pick oop and fling intull t' muck!"

Nell stalked on proudly. She had admitted a good deal.

"But who——"

"Niver heed wha, curse him! Oh, I'se be even wi' him yet. To coom to me—and mek me—me—Nell Carradus—believe him—think as he loved ma. I might ha knawn! It's not for want o' seein' plenty o' sic wark. Eh, fool—silly fool as thoo is, Nell Carradus!" She stamped the ground in her intense mortification.

"Do you kna what it is to dream silly, daft things—to think as God meant you for summat grand? You were niver saa daft happen as to believe what a leein' tongue telt ya. Eh, thoo fool, fool—Nell Carradus. Theer niver was sic a fool as thee! I'se spoiled his beauty for him any road for a bit. I cut his cheek oppen wi' his awn diamond ring! That's summat to think ower!"

"But I don't understand——"

"Of course you don't understand!" Nell spoke in an almost compassionate tone. "I telt you, you couldn't understand sic wark. When a man comes courtin' you, he'll mention t' weddin' t' saám time as he offers himsell!"

"I see now," said Eleanor sorrowfully. "You need not tell me any more. Oh, Nell, what an awful shame! You are right—I cannot help you in the very least in a trouble like that!"

The two walked on silently. Nell was comforted by the kindly companionship—perhaps a little gratified that Eleanor should thus insist on the cousinship.

Eleanor was thinking of the happiness that had come into her own life. It seemed so hard that she should have so much and this girl at her side so little, and her heart went out in warm pity. Nell had indeed had a hard, weary struggle against circumstance. Eleanor had grown very fond of Nell. She appreciated her character, and during the practising visits it was impossible not to be gratified by Nell's rapturous enjoyment of her own music. She would sit for long spells at a time enjoying Eleanor's fascinating playing.

The wonder of Eleanor's music was, in fact, one of the things that had drawn the jealousy and the suspicion out of Nell's heart. She could not hate as she had intended—the music had been the peacemaker. They had left the western view behind, and the town of Farbiggin now lay before them in the valley below—a short distance and they would leave the fell and descend by the rough stony lane that led to the main road. Rob and Polly could be seen just in front, seated one on each side of the upright gap in the wall that served as a stile in Moorshire.

"Nell, dear, I am going home with you to-night!"

"You can't!"

"Oh yes, I can. Now you must not stop me. I have dreamed long enough, I must see for myself how you live. I want to share a little bit of your life."

"Private finished?" cried Rob from her uplifted position.

"Guess whom we have seen!" cried Polly.

"I have never guessed anything in my life," returned Eleanor brightly. It was a relief to both girls to turn to the children's chatter.

"Well, we've seen Mr. Arthur Calthwaite! He was away in front—oh, a long way, but we knew him!"

"How could you?" said Eleanor incredulously.

"Why, we knew him by his dandy suit! You can tell Mr. Calthwaite a very long way off by his get up."

"Polly!" said Eleanor sharply.

"Well, we can. You can't deny it. You would have known him yourself! I suppose he has been out for an airing to see the sunset, too!"

Eleanor started at the innocent words, and looked hastily at Nell. A thought came into her mind which seemed to strangle her. And as she looked the tell-tale blood was rising high in Nell's cheeks, and as the colour deepened in the one girl's face it left that of the other. Eleanor half staggered.

"Why, Miss Carradus!" said Polly, looking at her attentively, "have you hurt yourself? You are as white as my handkerchief!"

"I must have slipped," said Eleanor lightly.

"There's no stone or anything," said Rob, searching the ground with her eyes. "Did you twist your ankle?"

"Oh, what questions you girls do ask!" cried Eleanor irritably.

Nell had so far been engaged in seeking to hide her own confusion, but as she now looked at her companion she became aware that something was amiss.

"If I were you, Miss Polly and Miss Rob, I'd run off home now. Miss Carradus says as she's going to step round by our house!"

Polly drew herself up deeply offended.

"Yes, that will be the best," said Eleanor. "Don't wait, there's good children!"

Polly and Rob slipped off the wall and took the broad hint without another word.

"Well I never!" said Polly.

"What a cross, rude thing she is!"

"If we had known we would not have come."

"Of course not!" agreed Rob."

But when the girls were well out of sight Eleanor turned to Nell. "He was not the one you were speaking of?"

There was deep anxiety in her face, her eyes looked with the expression of some dumb, wounded animal, and Nell's motherly heart awakened and she would have given a great deal to be able to lie freely. Instead she made no reply at all, but walked onward.

"Nell, you must tell me. Stop!"

"Well, if you must kna! Aye, it was *him* as hes joost left ma."

Never a word in reply made Eleanor, but she swayed a little as she walked.

Nell took her arm, and they walked on in silence until they reached the main road.

"You'd best let me take you reet home."

"No, I'm going with you."

"I wouldn't to-neet!"

"Yes, I shall—I've dreamed long enough. It seems that we have both dreamed the same dream, you and I, Nell." She put her hand across her eyes as if to brush away the mist. "But I can't think just now—I must do—do. So let me come with you. If I think, I shall go mad!"

Nell's nursing instincts helped her to realise that it was best to give way, so together they passed down the Scarth—Scarth-siders watching them as they passed, and wondered what was up. It was the first time that Eleanor had threaded her way through the winding yards, and she was amazed and disgusted at much she saw.

"I'd best ga in a minnut t' first!" said Nell. She was afraid that her mother might possibly be in, though she knew it was her usual habit to be out at this hour.

"I don't want my mother to see you. You'd best gaa if she's in."

Eleanor looked up at the dingy dwelling. It was worse than her liveliest imagination. The three children were playing on the doorstep, grubby but contented.

"Mudder's inside!" remarked Bobbie. "She's asleep!"

Nell pushed the children aside and entered the room. In a corner, reclining in the armchair, Maria sat with her head thrown back, apparently in a drunken sleep. Nell gave a swift glance and then returned.

"You'd best not come in. She's asleep, but she might waken any time."

"Just let me take one look," Eleanor urged. She hardly knew herself to-night. She felt so strangely insistent in the matter. Something had struck so cold to her heart. Anything to keep her from thinking.

"Well, one look, then. One look 'ull be enough!" said Nell scornfully.

Eleanor entered and glanced round the kitchen. It looked better and more comfortable and homelike inside than out. There was an air of careful thought about the arrangements. Evidently Nell had impressed herself on the place. Only the sleeping woman in the corner spoiled the little home.

"How white she is!" whispered Eleanor. Then her eyes filled with horror as, taking a step forward, she gasped: "Nell! Nell! I do believe she's dead!"

Nell rushed to her mother's side and placed her hand on her forehead. She lifted it hastily with a start.

"Oh, my God!"

Both girls stood staring with wide-open eyes, entranced, before the ghastly figure. The eyes were shut, but the mouth was half open, and the whole appearance of broken humanity was awestriking enough. Drink and vice had finished at last with Maria Carradus—the worst had come.

"I wonder if t' divil's satisfied t' last?" muttered Nell, yet her eyes filled with tears.

Eleanor put her hand on her shoulder. "Oh, you poor, poor child! Oh, I never knew—I never thought she was like —like that!"

Nell gave one gasping sob—then she recovered herself. There was something to do. She turned quickly and went to the door.

"Bobbie, my lad, run off to Dr. Maddison's, and exe him to coom as fast as iver he can. Tell him as theer's summut wrang wi' thy mother. And thee, Martha, run off tull Aunt Janet's and tell her as Nell 'ull thank her kindly if she'll step round a minnut for somethin' particular."

"Shall I say as moother's badly?"

"Eye, if thoo's a mind, only baith on ya mun be sharp. Polly, my lass, thoo can gaa wi' Martha. Thoo shall hev a cake if thoo's a good lass afore thoo gaa's to bed, nobbut thoo bides oot for a bit and meks naá bother!"

Nell had a quick, executive mind.

"You'd best go!" she remarked to Eleanor quietly.

"Perhaps I had—but you'll let me know if I can help you?"

"Aye, happen!"

"I suppose it was the drink," said Eleanor, as she took a last horrified look at the bloated, abandoned woman.

"Drink and t' Wild Boar Inn and other things beside," returned Nell.

"And nothing could be done?"

"T' divil's stronger nor a woman!" Nell spoke almost sharply. "And as for t' 'Wild Boar,' why, it's your awn hoose!"

Eleanor hardly took in the reply just then; she had had enough. Nell was right—she had better get away. The two pair of mournful eyes faced each other silently, but there was still something that Eleanor wanted.

"May I kiss you, Nell?"

She did not wait for a reply, but flinging her arms impulsively round her cousin's neck, she kissed again and again that proud cheek, and as Nell felt the pure warm lips it seemed to her as though this cousin of hers had kissed away in some part the deep humiliation of an hour ago.

Eleanor slipped away, and, as the door closed Nell was alone with her dead. For a few moments she could only stand mechanically counting the beats of her own thumping heart. Then she went softly up to the corpse and knelt down.

"Mother, mother," she sobbed, "I'se cursed tha many a time—I didn't kna. Noo I kna for mysell. I niver kent afore reetly what happened to tha! I'd niver, niver ha blaámed tha sa hard—it's him, him as first ruined tha, as took thy life from tha—it's him as wants cursin'. And thoo was aulus saa prood o' thi lass, mother." Then, as she heard the latch rattle, she kissed the dead woman, and, leaping to her feet, the old hard look returned.

CHAPTER XXXV

It was the custom at The Abbey during the spring and summer months to substitute late supper for the usual dinner, but when Eleanor arrived this meal was already over, and Mary was established in the drawing-room, whilst Ryder was busily writing by the lamplight in a corner of the room.

"Well, dear!" exclaimed Mary, "I was afraid those children

had lost you altogether. Ryder was preparing to go out and scour the country for you!"

Eleanor managed to produce a thin smile.

"I'm awfully sorry to have been so late, Miss Glyn; the time slips away so, and to-night——"

"Why, how tired you look, dear! Teddie, draw up that big chair for Eleanor."

Ryder came forward quickly and did Mary's behest.

"Now, Miss Carradus!" and he lifted up a cushion preparatory to slipping it behind her back as she seated herself.

"Thank you very much, but really I ought to go and tidy myself!"

"Oh, nonsense!" said Mary. "Never mind about dressing. Your supper will be ready any time. Jacobs is sure to have heard you come in!"

"I knew the walk would be too much for her," remarked Ryder, as he returned to his writing. "It is far further than one thinks to get round by the face of Windy Scar."

"It was not exactly the walk," began Eleanor, for she felt that she owed some explanation. Mary knew by her voice that something out of the way had happened, and her face grew serious.

"Well, you see," stammered Eleanor, "I met Nell Carradus, and I thought I would go home with her." Ryder laid down his pen again. "I wanted to see how she lived. She didn't want me to go, you know; it wasn't her fault"—the words came out hurriedly now—"but I would go—I forced her to let me go—and when I got there her mother was at home, and we thought she was asleep; and while Nell and I were looking at her—we found that she was dead! And I know it's very stupid of me, only——"

Eleanor panted out the words, and her lips trembled ominously.

"Oh, my dear child!"

Eleanor rose. "Yes, I know it's stupid of me—only, you know, I've never seen any one look quite like—like she did, Miss Glyn!"

Ryder was rising also, but Mary motioned him with her eyes and her forehead to remain where he was.

"I don't wonder, dear, that you were upset. It must have been terrible—terrible. Would you really rather go?"

For Eleanor had already fled to the door which Ryder hastily opened for her. She was making towards her room when Vixen came bounding to meet her. She stooped, and throwing her arms round her neck, she kissed her passionately. "Vixen, darling!" she whispered, "it was all a mistake—quite a mistake. Good dog! No, go and lie down, my sweet!" Then, with blinded eyes, she hurried off to her own room, and kneeling by the bed, sobbed piteously.

"Aye, it was *him* as hes joost left ma!" Nell's simple words had shattered the dream.

Eleanor had only told Mary half the story. "I will never, never, never tell anybody any more," she thought. She had been wholly unnerved and unprepared for the great shock of coming suddenly upon Maria Carradus dead by her own fireside. But it was not altogether due to this that the colour had passed from her cheeks and the light had gone out of her face.

But happily for Eleanor the Glyns need never know more than she had told them.

The joyous excitement of the last few months was now over, and at the first touch of heart trouble a wave of home sickness, or mother sickness, swept over the girl. She had been so comfortable, so happy, so contented in her life. She had hardly had a moment for regretting any of her past delights. Her time in England had been ideal. She enjoyed her immediate surroundings. Mr. Glyn was always kindness itself, and Mary had accepted her as if she had been a younger sister, and even Ryder's companionship had been very pleasant. Day by day he had brought some fresh interest into her life, and had succeeded in drawing her far more into his many plans and projects than she at all realised.

As to Arthur Calthwaite, she had for some time regarded him as her possession. He had thrown his personal spell

over her, and she, full of girlish romance, had willingly yielded herself to the fascinating influence; but with one deft blow the ideal was shattered—the romance had turned into horrible farce.

So Eleanor's first overpowering thought was, that she wanted her mother.

"Oh, I have no one!" she moaned. "Don't you know that something has hurt your little Eleanor, mother dearest?" and again she buried her face in the snowy counterpane.

There was a gentle tap at the door, and she sprang to her feet. It was only Madge. She entered calmly and took no particular notice of Eleanor's woebegone appearance.

"Miss Glyn sends her love, miss, and thinks perhaps you would rather not come down again. She is sending your supper upstairs."

Eleanor was grateful for the considerate thought. Mary always seemed to think of the exact thing that helped any situation.

"Thank Miss Glyn for me please, Madge. That will be very nice. I must say I have rather a headache!"

"You'll feel better after your supper, miss!" said Madge soothingly as she left the room.

Just before Eleanor went to sleep Madge appeared again to see that she was comfortable and had everything she wanted.

"I wouldn't fret, my lamb!" she said kindly, for she could not ignore the tear-stained cheeks. "There is no good done by fretting. You are overtired, and they are all very much upset downstairs that you should have seen such a sight—the master especially—but don't you think any more about it, miss. It's all over now."

Eleanor smiled gratefully in response to the old woman's solicitude. "She doesn't really know," thought poor Eleanor. "They don't any of them know."

Not think about it! Why, long after midnight she kept waking up off and on with strange, maddening dreams—dreams of Maria Carradus, of Nell, of Calthwaite, of the

scramble up the Scar, of the Windy Scar itself, even of the fiery sun.

Once it seemed to her that that awful woman was rushing after her up the stony path, and that she could not climb any quicker, and she waked, screaming, as the dead hand was laid on her shoulder, and the bloated lips touched her cheek.

Again she dreamed that she and Calthwaite were seated as they had often lately sat, and when she looked, his face had turned to a grinning death's-head, and she had turned to fly, but he drew her nearer, nearer, ever nearer, and again she shrieked aloud.

This time she waked to find Madge in the room holding a glass in her hand.

"It's all right, my pet—it is only Madge. There—there—drink this, my lamb!"

She raised the scared girl on her arm, and put the glass to her lips.

Eleanor drank the liquid obediently, and then sighed deeply as she lay back again.

"It was a dream, I suppose."

"Yes, my pet, just a dream!" she replied soothingly. "You cried out and you were heard, and Miss Mary rang for me."

As a matter of fact it was Ryder who had heard the piercing outcry, and he had roused Mary.

"Did I say anything?" she asked nervously.

"No, no, dear; you only cried out. Now lie down—you will be asleep in a few minutes now, and Miss Mary says you are on no account to get up to breakfast."

Eleanor acquiesced easily. The sleeping-draught was already taking effect.

"Good-night, Madge!"

"Good-night, my pet!"

Eleanor turned, and Madge seated herself for a few minutes before leaving her.

Eleanor's final effort was to toss herself round restlessly, and

flinging up her arms she cried piteously, though unconsciously, "Oh, kiss me, mother darling!"

And Madge, creeping to the bedside, kissed the flushed, soft cheek, and breathed a silent prayer over her charge as she stood watching until the regular breathing showed that she was really asleep at last.

The next day was Sunday. Early in the afternoon Mary retired again to rest with a severe headache, and Eleanor sat down by the sunny window, half playing with Vixen and half reading a story.

A dainty dessert was laid out on a side-table awaiting the arrival of Mr. Glyn and Ryder—a little light refreshment after the labours of Sunday School, for afternoon tea was always later on Sunday.

The dark lines were plainly visible under Eleanor's eyes, but she was better and herself again, only suffering from an undue amount of severe thinking and strong mental effort, which always somewhat disturbed her equilibrium.

When the father and son returned, however, she was bright and lively, and served them with her usual ease.

"Well," remarked Ryder, sighing deeply, "we are preparing for Whitsuntide again. Oh dear!"

"Why, what is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing. Only I have a fit of laziness upon me, and Sunday School becomes tedious work before the treat—more scholars, more unruliness, and general sense of unorderliness!"

"I think you show great want of spirit," remarked Eleanor severely. "You ought to rejoice in the joy of others."

Ryder did not retort that she herself had only been passing the hot afternoon in peace and comfort away from the rush and overpowering closeness of a large Sunday School.

"Oh, I know, Miss Carradus, but man is a selfish animal, and he is only human."

Eleanor turned to Mr. Glyn.

"Mr. Glyn, I have something I want very much to ask you. I don't think it is business—it's more social!"

Mr. Glyn smiled benignly. He was pleased that she had recovered so soon.

"Tell me!" he replied.

"Well, does the 'Wild Boar' belong to me?"

"It does, and it doesn't."

Ryder looked up with interest.

"Now, Mr. Ryder," she said peevishly, "I rather wish you were not present, because I may say some things that will make you boast over me, and use that horrid expression, 'I told you so!' and if you do I shall hate you!"

"I'll go if you'd rather. But I suppose I may take some of those grapes with me?"

"Nonsense. You can stay, of course, only you needn't listen, that's all!"

Ryder laughed pleasantly. It always rejoiced his heart when Eleanor mocked at him.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Glyn, but you know yesterday Nell told me that the 'Wild Boar' was mine, and if it is—it's awful! Why, I shall feel as if it were partly my fault about Nell's mother. Would it be?" she urged anxiously. "Please do tell me—really and truly."

"Well, you see, at the moment, my dear, the house belongs to you—but it is leased to a brewery company. As a matter of fact the lease runs out this Whitsuntide. Then it will be in your hands, unless you renew."

"Do you mean that I shall be a kind of publican, then?" Eleanor emphasised the last noun with disgust.

Ryder could not help his lips twitching behind the *Missionary News* he was perusing.

"Well, if you like to put it so?" said her guardian gravely.

"But can't I stop its being a public-house or something?"

"You can cease to apply for a licence, and then no one could sell beer or spirits in the house any more!"

"Then that's what we'll do; shall we, Mr. Glyn? and then Mr. Ryder can have it if he wants. He'll soon have quite a menagerie under his charge! A Green Dragon and a Wild

Boar!" Eleanor came to her decisions rapidly. She did everything by impulse.

But Mr. Glyn was not quite so ready. The matter was more of a "business" one than Eleanor imagined, and the lawyer was a careful trustee.

"You would thereby reduce the value of your property by some £10,000," said he drily.

Eleanor stared. "Mr. Glyn, you can't mean that! A dirty, horrid place like the 'Wild Boar'? I passed it last night, and stopped a minute and heard the shouting inside, and a little child came out with a pot of beer, and it nearly made me sick!"

Dainty Eleanor did indeed look far removed from complicity with the horrors of a Scarth public-house.

"£10,000 is about the difference between the value of the premises as licensed and unlicensed, in such a position. The magistrates are practically granting no new licences they can possibly avoid, the feeling in the country is so strong—so the old ones rise in value yearly, and the 'Wild Boar' is the only one in the centre of the Scarth."

"Then what an awful lot the people must drink to make the house pay!" she said thoughtfully. Here was a complication she had not anticipated. "I can do it, I suppose, if I like?"

"Oh, you can, of course!"

"Then we will, won't we? Why, Mr. Glyn, I could never sleep at night if I thought I was making money out of that awful place, out of the foolishness and misery of the people."

Mr. Glyn was a very good Christian man, and he was what the Temperance people called quite straight on the Drink Question, but all the same it was greatly against his business instincts to drop £10,000 for a client. For himself he would not have thought twice about the matter, but his responsibilities for a client stood on a different basis in his mind.

"I'll think it over, my dear," he said thoughtfully; "it is not a thing I can give an opinion upon without consideration."

"And, Mr. Glyn, as we are talking, I want you to arrange

for Nell to have some money. I had thought about £10,000. Do you think that would be fair?"

If Mr. Glyn had not been extremely polite and phlegmatic he might have gasped at his ward's rapid flights; as it was he merely uncrossed his legs thoughtfully and recrossed them again.

"You see, it would only be fair, and then there are those three children too. They ought to have something!"

"I understand that the children and Nell are at present to go to the Great House. William and Janet would hear of nothing else."

"Then if they are prepared to do so much for them, I must do my share, of course!"

Mr. Glyn could not exactly bring his mind to this wholesale dissipation of the fortune.

"Of course, my dear, it is quite right that you should think that something must be done, that something substantial would only be fair under the circumstances—but you are so surprisingly quick, Miss Eleanor, you must really allow me a little time."

"Of course," she returned politely; "I know I always like to get at things quickly. But there's just one thing more I have thought about. Couldn't we pull down most of the houses belonging to me on the Scarth and rebuild them and tidy the place up, you know? It really is horridly dirty. I should hate to live there myself—really I was quite ashamed yesterday. I can't get it out of my mind. Why, the houses look the wrong way, they want twisting round!"

Ryder could not really help laying down his paper and breaking into a soft laugh.

"Well, Miss Carradus, really this is a Sunday business talk. When you talk business you are terrific!"

Eleanor turned on him deeply offended. "Now you are laughing; I have not been half nor a quarter as terrific this afternoon as you often are about the things you talk to me about. It's just because I am a woman that you jeer. Why, I thought that the rebuilding of the Scarth would be just the

kind of thing you would approve of. I thought you were so keen on sanitary dwellings, or whatever you call them!"

"I'm very sorry," said Ryder, "I am indeed. Of course I am interested, only you put it rather—well, as if you thought it could all be done to-morrow!"

"However I may have appeared to you to put it, I have never believed that! I have some small amount of sense, I trust!"

"My dear," interposed her guardian, "all that you have suggested this afternoon will need a good deal of consideration, and I am sure that neither Ryder nor myself would hinder you in anything reasonable that you wanted—always, of course, provided that your own interests were properly secured. I should never feel justified in advising you seriously against your own interests."

"Of course, Mr. Glyn, you know far better than I do, only don't you think I should be happier all my life if I had a clear conscience? It wouldn't really matter if there were rather less money. There is so much more than I want."

But Mr. Glyn was still not quite prepared to commit himself to an opinion.

He rose. "Well, Miss Eleanor, it is quite right for you to have spoken to me, and I will certainly see what can be done in the directions you have indicated, and that is all I can say this afternoon."

"I'm very much obliged, Mr. Glyn. I am afraid I give you a lot of trouble!"

"Not at all, my dear, not at all," he said cordially as he left the room.

Ryder laid down his paper politely when his father had departed.

"Oh, go on with your reading, Mr. Ryder—I am going too. You have hurt my mind, and I loathe any one who hurts my mind!"

"I haven't really, have I, Miss Carradus?"

"Of course you have!" she retorted. "It isn't nice when you make up your mind to do something that you think right,

to have other people mocking. It makes me think when people do that, that all their wonderful talk about duty and responsibility, &c., &c., &c., is nothing whatever but talk and false boasting when it comes to the real point."

"You don't really mean what you are saying?" Ryder, too, was hurt. He was extremely sensitive on the point of acting up to his professions. Why would she take things in such a desperately wrong light?

Eleanor could not imagine herself why she had flown out in such a way, but she was certainly not going to give in now.

"Of course I always mean what I say," she declared as she left the room.

CHAPTER XXXVI

For the next week or more Eleanor passed her days in a kind of dream. She went through the little daily affairs much as she was accustomed to do; but Mary missed the usual eagerness and cheerful light-heartedness.

Eleanor was extremely restless and absent-minded. She started at the bell, she refused to go out, she absented herself in her own room.

Mary was puzzled. "Dear, are you sure that you are quite well?" she ventured one day.

Eleanor's pale cheeks crimsoned. "Oh, perfectly well, Miss Glyn, thank you! Don't worry about me, please. I get an odd fit upon me now and again. It will pass all in good time. A little wholesome neglect is what I want, I think!"

And with that most unsatisfactory explanation Mary had to be content.

There was not a shadow of doubt in Eleanor's mind regarding her attitude towards Calthwaite. He had wounded her deeply—wounded her in the most sensitive point, struck at all womanhood by his treatment of her and Nell. Every part of her nature rose up in rebellion at the idea of the possible insult which Calthwaite might yet seek to lay upon her; at

the thought that even yet he might presume to offer her marriage. So she was strangely restless. Sometimes she hoped that she should never see him again, at others that it was quite impossible that he could really come to the point with her after what had happened. Surely he might guess that his insult to Nell might become known to her? Then there were times when a buoyant reckless spirit came over her, and she yearned for an occasion on which she might try her strength against his. She went over every possible conversation in her mind, making up what she intended to say. But at night when all was quiet, and there was nothing to hinder the pressure of steady thought from closing around her, then Eleanor was very, very miserable. She was miserable with pure loneliness. In spite of the many friends she had made in England it seemed that there was no one to whom she could now go—no one to whom she could open her mind.

These Glyns had been very kind—very kind indeed, she reiterated to herself; but though they had never said a word to her, she had an impression that her Calthwaite infatuation had not been quite according to their minds.

The two women with whom she was most at ease were Miss Calthwaite and Mary. Miss Calthwaite was, of course, quite out of the question; and as for Mary—well, at the thought of consulting Ryder's sister, she blushed all alone by herself.

Why not write to Kätchen? The thought came to her as an inspiration one long, restless night; and next day Eleanor sent the following letter flying across to Germany:—

THE ABBEY, FARBIGGIN,
April.

"DEAR, DARLING KÄTCHEN,—How would it be if I came over to Germany next month to spend my twenty-first birthday in the dear old Vaterland? Could dear Frau von Hervart do with me?

"Yours ever the same,
HELENCHEN."

It was nearly a fortnight after the memorable Saturday, and

Eleanor was still suffering from the strain of uncertainty. She had neither seen nor heard of Calthwaite during that time.

Eleanor knew perfectly well that she was thinner and paler than usual, and that there were deep cups under her eyes. She was intensely mortified that it should be so—mortified that it seemed impossible for her to keep her trouble to herself. Even at lunch to-day she thought she had noticed both Mr. Glyn and Ryder looked at her with awakened and comprehending interest; and she grew desperate.

Mary was out for the afternoon at the Vicarage, but had promised to be in to afternoon tea. So Eleanor decided that she had a good opportunity for a thorough musical grind, so searching through her music, and picking out one of the most difficult of Chopin's studies, she set to work.

A study of Chopin does not leave much time for private meditation, and Eleanor started as the door opened and Jacobs' even voice announced, "Mr. Calthwaite, miss."

She rose slowly from her seat, and stood with her hand resting on the polished piano case; but she made no movement forward, but sought to think of the things she had meant to say. In a flash she knew they were gone from her.

Calthwaite came forward in his usual easy style, and smiled his old irresistible smile so full of unexpressed flattery that for a second Eleanor's heart sank. Was she going to succumb to the first smile? But instantly she recovered herself, and her face grew cold and hard, though the suppressed nervousness reddened her cheeks.

The position was awkward enough. It was difficult to refuse a man with scorn until he had made the proposal; yet she had no intention of allowing him to insult her with a declaration, neither was she certain that he had come for that purpose, though there was a look in his face that warned her.

"How do you do, Miss Carradus?" and he put out his hand cordially; but Eleanor stooped to pick up a piece of music that had fallen down.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Calthwaite," she remarked without a shade of interest in her voice. She looked straight at him, and

noticed a tiny scrap of sticking-plaster on his left cheek. That little piece of plaster calmed Eleanor still further; made everything once again clear and straightforward.

Calthwaite seemed quite unaware of the implied snub.

"Which chair, Miss Carradus?" and he laid his hand on a comfortable chair. "But perhaps I am interrupting you?"

"I'm quite comfortable here," and she dropped down again on to the stool. She felt protected by the grand piano in front of her.

Calthwaite thinking that she was very shy decided that he had better plunge into the matter he had come about without delay.

"I called this morning on Mr. Glyn, Miss Carradus, and I have permission to speak to you this afternoon."

"Indeed!"

"And I trust that I have your permission also." He was so sure of his ground that again he smiled.

She waited a moment in silence; the tug of war had come.

"No; there you are mistaken!" and she rose.

"Eleanor!"

"I beg your pardon."

Calthwaite flushed at the deep scorn in the tone. It struck him that one hundred thousand pounds would slip away if he were not careful.

"Excuse me, sir."

She left the friendly protection of the piano, and drawing her skirt aside as she passed him, she moved towards the bell.

"Mr. Calthwaite, I regret to say that the man made a blunder this afternoon. I am not at home. Will you let yourself out, or shall I ring the bell?"

"I don't think I quite understand!" he stammered. Had she wavered an instant, had he seen the least suspicion of a quiver on those little lips, he might have ventured more; but as it was, he merely stammered, stopped short, and repeated the unready words, "I—I don't understand!"

She lifted her hand from the bell without ringing it, and walked slowly to the door. Then she turned, "I hardly think,

Mr. Calthwaite, that so long as there is a mirror in the room I need explain," and without another word she opened the door and closed it softly behind herself.

Then she quickly escaped to her own room, and stood there panting. She had done it—done this awful thing—closed the door behind her for ever, crushed the life out of the dream. She expected within herself that she would now be filled with uncontrollable remorse or exquisite sorrow; but she was amazed to find herself raging with anger.

"To come to me!—me!—with that scar on his cheek, to dare to lift his eyes to mine!"

Then, instead of weeping, she discovered that her eyes were dry, that her heart was quite resolved; and she felt an unexpected sense of reprieve come over her. She threw up her arms and gave a great sigh of sheer relief. Then, catching sight of her white, strained countenance in the glass, she forthwith mocked at it derisively. "Oh, Eleanor! You—you moaning for a man like that." She went to a certain drawer and drew out an assortment of goods—flowers, sketches, notes—not very many, but enough. The fire was ready set for lighting, so she placed them on the top of the coals. Then she struck a match, and lighted them.

Her face lightened with the dancing light, and, satisfied, she waited until the last little spark had run up and down in vain amongst the black ashes. Then she arrayed herself in a new afternoon frock which had just come from London, and descended, hoping that Mary had returned for afternoon tea.

When Eleanor appeared Jacobs, whilst handing her the afternoon's post, informed her that Miss Glyn was not yet returned.

Kätchen's well-known handwriting was clearly visible, and Eleanor tore open the letter. She wrote most enthusiastically, sending the kindest message from Frau von Hervart, urging Eleanor to come with all speed, in order that she might be in time for certain musical events which were impending.

Eleanor laid the letter down, smiling happily to herself at the ideas which the bright letter brought before her. The

thought of genial, beautiful, friendly old Germany took away the sense of nightmare under which she had been labouring.

She would have no more emotional experiences, she would slip away for a little rest and change.

When Mary returned, Eleanor seated herself on a low stool in such a position that Mary could not see her face. She did not speak, and Mary remarked quietly, though with an anxious heart, "Jacobs tells me that Mr. Calthwaite has been here."

"Yes, he came, and he has gone, and I never—never—want to see him again!"

Mary's heart leaped up with gladness. No words could express the relief this short, decided sentence was to her.

Her father had told her in a few brief words before lunch that Mr. Calthwaite was coming, and she had felt that though this thing was very bitter to her, she could do nothing but let Eleanor have a perfectly free hand. She could not in the least degree bias her in favour of Ryder.

She had gone to the Vicarage, and poured out her soul to Catherine, who had stormed alternately at Ryder, Calthwaite, and Eleanor; and she had been terror-stricken at the thought of what Ryder might find when he returned from his office. So when Eleanor burst forth in such a determined manner with her news, she could not resist seizing her hand and saying rejoicingly, "Oh, I am so glad!"

"Well, we need not discuss him, Miss Glyn, but I think that I owe it to you and Mr. Glyn to tell you that I discovered some short time ago that I had made an awful mistake, which I shall never cease to regret."

Mary asked no more. The less she knew of Eleanor's private feelings the better, she thought.

Eleanor drew out Kätchen's letter from her pocket.

"I think, Miss Glyn, that it would be a good thing if I had a little change. I want to go back to Germany for a visit. I should like to go back at once. I should like to go this very week!"

Mary took the letter and read it. She could not help smiling at the enthusiasm.

"I am sure we must be very dull after all this!" she remarked sympathetically. "I am sure that it can be arranged somehow. I will tell my father that it is the right thing for you."

And then they talked about Germany until the dressing-gong sounded.

CHAPTER XXXVII

DR. MADDISON had Nell on his mind. It worried him to see her so dull and listless. By dint of some considerable amount of persuasion, he had induced her to agree to breaking up the house, and had satisfied her that for the present at any rate she ought to take advantage of her uncle and aunt's kind offer of a home at the Great House.

Nell was passing through a curious state of mind. Her companions at the tobacco factory looked on her with surprise. They supposed that she must be fretting for her mother, and yet they could not imagine that Maria Carradus could be any great loss.

Since Nell's success at the festival her companions were prouder than ever of their 'Bacca Queen, and, to tell the truth, the managers were surprised as week by week Nell continued her work, and failed to give in her "notice"; for rumours had spread in Farbiggin that the Scarth heiress was taking her cousin up, and this would, as all felt, mean a great change of some kind for Nell. But any such idea seemed far from her mind, and though she now lived at the Great House, she went regularly to work, and did her duty with the same dogged energy as of old, but the old, cheerful smile seldom dawned upon her face.

In vain Dr. Maddison asked her what was the matter. She always gave the invariable answer that "she ailed nowt!"

Then he risked his friendship with her by asking "what she had done with that young man of hers?"

And the risk was great, for Nell turned on him indignantly as if he had been guilty of the rankest impertinence, and

suggested that even a "'bacca lass's tongue wasn't med to answer a' t' questions as folk bethowt theersells to exe."

Whereby Dr. Maddison perceived that Nell Carradus was in no fit mood for reason, so he turned the matter off with one of his short, sarcastic laughs.

The fact was, however, that Nell was suffering deeply from self-disappointment. She was absolutely wild with herself. It seemed to her in her heated imagination that she would like to tear away from herself that Nell who had brought all this humiliation upon her. For, notwithstanding all her self-depreciating remarks, Nell had always felt deep down in her heart that she was no fool: yet here she found herself, self-proven without any shadow of doubt, a declared ordinary woman-fool—taken in, misled, and almost ruined by a commonplace, flattering tongue. It was agony to her to discover that she who had scorned her mother, and looked with undisguised contempt on the other silly girls of her acquaintance, should have acted so absurdly. It seemed to her that she hardly dare walk the streets for fear of meeting the cause of her humiliation. Try as she might to cast this thing behind her, she could not do it. Down came the thoughts and remembrances of past episodes, foolish speeches, petty doings which made her blush again with shame. Even the sight of Jane Ann Martin trapesing up and down the Scarth with her puny infant in her arms seemed to turn her sick with impotent horror.

Then again there was no doubt that Nell was extremely dull. All the excitement of the practisings and the Festival were over. There was now no reason for frequenting The Abbey, so that she missed the refinement of Miss Glyn's and Eleanor's companionship, and then John Fleming had left the town.

Now that Nell had no one else to think about she was terribly homesick for Jack. She turned a deaf ear to many a one who would fain have offered her consolation. It was Jack she wanted, and as she could not have him, she sat at home in the evenings or strolled listlessly about with Sarah.

The doctor offered to pay her expenses in any profession she chose to take up, but even this generous offer seemed to be no temptation.

"Naá, naá, Dr. Maddison. Let me a-be!"

"Is it that young Fleming she is wanting?" asked the doctor of Janet privately.

"Naá, sir, I don't kna. She sent him off a while sen. He com tull oor William, and telt him as she wadn't hev him. I niver seed a lad sa down. But he's a good plucked 'un is Jack, and he went straight tull his job at Low Ridding, and med naá bother. Oor William telt him as efter a' it was happen t' best as it was, as t' lass was nin religious, and that he'd better lait a proper saved lass."

"There I disagree with your husband," said the doctor, shortly; "John Fleming may go a very long way before he finds another Nell Carradus, saved or unsaved!"

"That's what I say, Doctor!" acquiesced Janet; "but William says I'se wrang, and saved folk should not be unequally yoked together wi' unbelievers!"

"Well, well, Mrs. Carradus, I never was a theologian, especially as I happen to be one of the unsaved myself, but I agree with you that Nell could do with a little more saving grace, though she's a grand woman for all that!"

So Doctor Maddison in his perplexity decided that he would step over to The Abbey and consult Miss Glyn. When he called one afternoon he found Mary and Eleanor together.

Mary was delighted to see him, as she always enjoyed a good chat with Dr. Maddison. She appreciated the kind, hearty nature which lay underneath the rugged exterior, and the man instinctively modified himself in her presence, and refrained from exhibiting the full extent of his brusquerie. Probably Dr. Maddison's only chance of giving in his full allegiance to Christ lay not through the clergy nor dissenting revival preachers, but through the influence of this woman, whose sufferings and cheerful peacefulness he had been intimately acquainted with for the last ten years.

"The fact is, Miss Glyn, I am a bit of a worry, as you know. It is Nell Carradus this time!"

Eleanor looked up from her tea-making with interest.

"You see, it is absurd for a girl like that to continue at the tobacco shop on half a sovereign or some such ridiculous sum a week."

"It does seem a pity," Mary agreed.

"I suppose you know the history of her birth?"

"No, she never told me."

"Then I suppose I ought not to, but you're a safe person, Miss Glyn, and so no doubt is Miss Carradus!"

"I'll go if you like, Dr. Maddison," Eleanor suggested politely. She was always afraid of being *de trop* in this friendly household.

"Oh, nonsense. Well, I won't mention names, and then no harm will be done. The point is that her father was a gentleman—in fact, a titled man of a '*good*' old family as we call it in these snobbish days, though where the goodness comes in is a question. However, that accounts for the breeding which has puzzled me so often. I now understand where she gets that indefinable hauteur. Why, I felt like a whipped cur myself the other day when I sought to pry too deeply into her feelings!"

"I always maintained that Nell could not be pure Scarth," said Mary.

"No, well what I have indicated accounts for that feeling. So I offered to send her off to be trained. She'd make a capital nurse, for instance, but no suggestion has any effect. Now, what do you advise? Shall I let the matter drop or shall I press it? For the life of me I don't know why I bother! The girl is rude enough, but she's a good sort somehow, though her uncle does sigh over her as one of the unregenerate, and no doubt he is right from his point of view, but the fact is that I am rather afraid some fool or other may get hold of her. I warned her a short time ago, but she put me off—you'll think me quite an old grandmother, Miss Glyn!"

Eleanor went to the window on some vague pretence. "Some fool or other" was an expression she could not quite hear unmoved.

"Dr. Maddison," said Mary, "I think that you are just the kind of man to help Nell. She needs some one strong to guide her in the right way." Mary looked across at Eleanor and wondered whether she were at liberty to tell Eleanor's present proposal. "Dr. Maddison is asking us a difficult question. Is he not, Eleanor? We often discuss Nell, do we not?"

Dr. Maddison had his own ideas as to what he considered Eleanor's attitude ought to be towards her cousin. He was, in fact, a little antagonistic in his mind towards the girl. He felt that his friendship for Nell required it.

But Eleanor, quite unconscious that she was breaking down any prejudice, broke forth eagerly at Mary's suggestion. She foresaw that the doctor might be a strong ally both as regarding her guardian and Nell.

She therefore told him freely what was in her mind, and Dr. Maddison's face assumed a more and more comical expression, which Mary decidedly appreciated as she forcibly argued her point. It struck him that there was nothing to equal an eager woman bound for justice, for scrambling helter skelter over circumstances and cutting with her weapon of inconsequent logic the tangles of methodical unfairness.

"I suppose that I shall have to give in to Mr. Glyn, because I can't help it," she sighed. "He declines to arrange for Nell to have any more than £2,000 capital, the same sum as was left to her other cousins, but he says that I may give her as much as I like out of my ordinary income, and that I may pay for the keep of the three children of Nell's mother as well, so that is all I can do." She was sorry it was so little, for she had dreamed of turning Nell straightway into a rich woman.

The doctor smiled. "And quite enough for all good purposes," he remarked cordially. "We all want to help Nell, but we don't want to spoil her! And if she turns stupid and

refuses to take the money for herself, she might take it for a husband. If Nell would only persuade herself to make that young Fleming happy, matters might settle themselves comfortably!"

"Fleming? Is that the young man the florist that my sister-in-law is always quoting?"

"Yes; he is a smart fellow, and a good one too—quite pious, you know. Why, he is in your brother's class."

"One of my tenors," interrupted Eleanor.

"Yes, that's the man I mean. His late master told me only the other day that he had uncommonly good brains, and only needed a little additional capital to build himself up a first-class business and carry out to completion some exceedingly clever experiments. There's an investment for you, Miss Carradus!"

They laughed, and finally it was decided that when Eleanor called to wish goodbye at the Great House she might see what she could do to bring Nell to reason.

So the following evening Eleanor called on Janet, who received her with some amount of natural dignity and great cordiality. She brought her into the front parlour and found her the best chair, and inquired after her health, and suggested that the spring weather was seasonable.

"I'm going away for some time, Aunt Janet!" said Eleanor simply, "and I came to say goodbye before leaving. I am going to Germany."

"Germany, miss!" exclaimed Janet. "Well, I never! I'd have thought as you'd had enough o' foreign parts; as I've said many a time to our William, 'To think o' yon poor lass niver seed Farbiggin while she was twenty year auld!'"

"Farbiggin is an awfully nice place, only, you know, I have a lot of friends there who have been very kind to me." Janet went to the door.

"Nell," she called, "coom! Here's Miss Carradus; she wants tha!"

When Nell appeared she greeted her cousin bashfully, but noticed that she was looking extremely slender and tired, and

Eleanor as instantly noted the fact that Nell was shockingly altered.

"I'm going away to Germany, Nell," said Eleanor, looking straight in Nell's face; "I want a change."

"I see," returned Nell.

"Yes, and before I go, Nell, you remember what I once said about the money; I have done my best, and it has been decided that you are to have £2,000 of the money left to me, the same sum as was left to your other cousins."

Nell stood back a moment, and Janet made a short exclamation.

"I've telt you before as I don't want John Carradus' brass!"

"I know dear Nell, but this money is not his. It is mine, and this plan is right—the very least that is right—but it is all they will let me do at present. You know, if you don't want it now yourself, you might be glad to give it to some one else some time."

Eleanor became vague on this last point; she stumbled at the idea of using any word more explicit to Nell after what they had suffered together.

Nell was silent. She was so determined to hug her troubles that it was hard to have the grievance swept away.

"I know it is not much, Nell, not even what I call fair, but Mr. Glyn says that if you have any plans for yourself I may give you any money you may need from the income as well."

"Do you want me to thank you?" asked Nell bluntly, "because if you do I can't."

"Nell, fer sham' o' thisell!" cried her aunt.

"Oh dear, no!" said Eleanor heartily. "Of course I don't. There is no kindness in the matter at all. Now let us talk of something else. Where is my uncle?"

William came in, and Eleanor continued her call for a few minutes, and then departed well pleased with her visit.

Nell saw her to the door, and Eleanor could not help saying with a light laugh, "Nell, dear, you and I are two silly women. Give me a kiss before I go away!"

Nell allowed the kiss passively, and Eleanor slipped away a trifle disappointed.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

It was on Sunday night that Nell missed John Fleming the most.

She had established the habit of attending Mr. Glyn's Mission Room, and taking a walk with Jack afterwards, and so on the Sunday after Eleanor had left Farbiggin she turned in, merely for something to do.

The place was packed with people, and as the night was stormy, the warmth seemed cheerful.

Nell knew the routine of the service well. The prayers, the hymns, the hearty choruses; the quaint testimonies from the working men and women from the platform seemed to her to be much as usual; and again she wondered, as she had often wondered before, how people could talk as these people seemed able to do about their own inmost experiences.

But during the latter part of the service Ryder Glyn rose to give the address.

Nell always gave Ryder attention, partly because Jack talked so much about him, and partly because she never listened without bringing away some mental food on which her vigorous though uncultured mind could work in its own strange way.

But to-night, as Nell looked at Mr. Ryder from her corner, she was greatly struck with his look of depression. He seemed unusually nervous and anxious.

"Hes t' warld getten wrang wi' him and a'?" thought Nell to herself.

The interest of such an idea set her listening, but she very soon forgot the attitude of the speaker as the nervousness forsook him and he entered into the heart of his subject; and to-night it seemed as though Ryder were preaching to himself rather than to the people.

He had taken for his subject the man of God, Elijah, alone in the wilderness with his God.

In a few strong, picturesque strokes he showed the people

Elijah triumphant at Carmel—Elijah victorious over eight hundred and fifty prophets of Baal—Elijah when the hand of the Lord was upon him, and he girded up his loins and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel. And having shown the people the strength of the man with the power of Jehovah upon him, Ryder suddenly changed the picture from one of mighty triumph to one of miserable failure —the failure of a man without God. Showed the picture of a man who, with God, saved a kingdom; without God, fled for his life in terror at the threat of an angry woman.

"So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time!" Jezebel had said, and the prophet, flying into the wilderness and sitting under a juniper-tree, had requested that he might die.

"It is enough; now, Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers!"

And then he showed the tenderness of God to His discouraged servant, and this brought him to his text: "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee!" And dwelling for a few moments on the prophet's special circumstances, he turned the discourse round to the personal needs of himself and his audience.

"My friends, surely all of us have found that the journey is too great for us? I care not whether we be consciously the Lord's or not, but this journey—this journey of life stretching out before us—is too great for any one of us.

"Is there one here who can say, 'I am equal to this journey —for me there are no difficulties I cannot overcome—no foes I cannot conquer—no sorrows I cannot bear?'

"Friends, let us be honest with ourselves, let us confess that the journey is too great. Trials, disappointments, temptations flood our souls. They overwhelm us, they drag us down to despair, we faint for hunger, our strength is gone, the humiliation of a mighty fear terrorises over our spirits. And sometimes, friends, it seems to me that we come to a full stop in our lives. We know not how to go further; we have no strength to pursue the path which as yet we know not.

"Then what is the remedy? Let us arise and eat! Arise, friends, stand up boldly. Lift our drooping souls, eat of the bread of life and live.

"Let us know for ourselves that there is no true life apart from the Bread of Life. It is necessary that Christ Himself should be in and around us. Our life must be drawn from Him, if we are to know the life more abundant. Dear friends, the journey is indeed too great for us. It is too great for you, it is too great for me. I beseech you to take of the Bread of Life, and strengthen your weakness with the strength of God."

As he uttered the last words his voice dropped to a tenderly pleading tone, and then suddenly he raised himself to his full height, and his words poured forth as if from outside of himself a message had come to the people, and in delivering it the voice that rang through the hall was scornful with passion—

"Oh, my friends, what fools, what blind fools we are, to think that we—we the people here in this little town of Farbiggin, we mere nobodies on the face of the earth—can disregard the power of God which the greatest men the world has ever seen have needed—have striven for, have wept for, have died for!

"Some of you sometimes sing a hymn congratulating yourselves that you are not ashamed of Christ!

"Friends, I tell you clearly—passionately—with all my soul—I loathe that hymn! Ashamed! We ashamed? We miserable mortals to suggest, even to ourselves, that it is in some way to our credit that we are not ashamed of the God of the whole earth—the Lord Jehovah—omnipotent and mighty to save!

"Not ashamed of Christ the Son, who performed that miracle of all miracles when He became man—born of a woman—a pure virgin—but descended according to the flesh from a David, a Bathsheba, a Jehoram, a harlot named Rahab—and Christ the Son, who died for the world as His executioners lay gambling at His feet during the final agony!

"Ashamed, my friends, of God the Holy Ghost, who broods over this sin-sick world—who lightens our darkness, who calms our despair, who leads us into all truth!

"I have done! But listen ere I sit down to the words of the Lord Jehovah Himself to His servant Job, and whilst you are listening, consider your own position before the Eternal God.

"'Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it.

"'Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou me.

"'Wilt thou disannul My judgment? Wilt thou condemn Me, that thou mayest be righteous? Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like Him?

"'Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty.

"'Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath; and behold every one that is proud, and abase him.

"'Look on every one that is proud and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place.

"'Hide them in the dust together; and bind their faces in secret.

"'Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee!'"

Ryder sat down and the meeting closed, but Nell hardly waited a moment afterwards, but slipped away as quickly as she could—away—out—anywhere—only to be alone!

For it seemed as though the Lord were having a controversy with Nell. The words of the preacher had augmented the storm in that turbulent heart.

"The journey is too great for thee!" Nell knew this at last.

Yes, it was all quite true. She, as Mr. Ryder had said, had come to a full stop in her life. She knew it, and the Lord knew it.

Certainly the Lord knew it, and knowing it as He did, was it likely that He would allow this child of His to go forward alone? If the journey were too great, what then?

Nell fled from the thought—fled up the Scarth and out on to the fell. There was no John Fleming to-night. What did

that matter? She could go her walk alone. It was a wild, stormy night—one of those nights when there is no rain, but when the wind sweeps high and terrible and the clouds chase each other across the sky, playing a game of perpetual aggravation with the patient stars and the careering moon.

As Nell reached the Scarth wood which skirted the lower reaches of the fell, there was a roar as of a mighty ocean tempest amongst the great pines and beeches, larches and sycamores.

She stood for a few moments under a rough wall and listened. Without a break the wind howled and howled again in a continuous rush of crescendos and diminuendoes.

It seemed to the girl, standing shuddering there, that each roar answered a corresponding one in her own heart. A desire seized her to enter the wood, to pierce the tempest and discover what lay at its heart.

Without a thought of fear she passed through the little stile and went up through the dark undergrowth. The wind still played his fierce havoc with the new spring buds and leaves, and the moon cast down her weird and surprising shadows in her path.

But still Nell was not afraid. Not all the commotion around her was as fearful as the storm raging in her own heart.

The controversy with God was strong and fierce. Was she or was she not willing in all humility to acknowledge that it was necessary to her to accept the guidance of God, to respond to the call and say, "The journey is too great for me, give me to eat"?

"The journey is too great for thee!" Again the words rang in her excited ears. Nell knew the truth at last. She had known it, recognised in it impotent anger for some time now. Would the knowledge bring a blessing or a curse? Could she accept the conditions with all simplicity, and once and for all cast aside her pride and the controversy which she had presumed to hold with the Almighty?

It certainly was not Nell alone who was interested in the question.

Both God and the devil were involved in that controversy regarding the life of Nell Carradus.

It was not possible that God had remained an unmoved witness to the fierce, almost grand struggles after righteousness of this woman, whose life had from babyhood been blasted with the most blasting of all curses.

It was not possible that He who regardeth the prayer of the ravens when they cry should refrain from holding forth His hand to steady the tempest-tossed bark, from offering to take the helm.

Nell pressed through the wood out on to the wide fell. There was abundant light from the dashing moon and the spring sky, and down below the streets and outlying houses of Farbiggin could be traced by the soft, yellow lights.

Far up on the opposite highlands the lurid trail of the train showed forth the line to the north, and sounds came up from below of mixed street noises, now and then a distant shout, the strain of a band, the chorus of a hymn, and above all the wind howled exultantly.

"T' divil's in t' wind!" thought Nell, and involuntarily she threw out her arms to drive it from her.

"O God," she moaned. "I don't kna whar I is! I don't kna what's wrong wi' ma to-neet, but I want summat! Is it true as Thou canst give me what I want? I can't be what folk call religious. I can't get saved as these others do! But I want summut. Happen Mr. Ryder's reet. Happen Jack's reet! Happen it is Thee as I want, Lord! And if it is, coom. Oh, coom Lord, and save Nell Carradus from hersell and t' divil!"

It was a queer, odd prayer, but it contained what the Lord had been waiting for.

He never enters unasked. He never rules by force. He loves in spite of all, but He rules over willing hearts alone.

Nell was strongly mystical. She had never throughout the course of her life doubted for one instant the reality and personality of God and the devil.

She was as sure of the devil and could, as she imagined,

gauge his influence over her as if she had met him face to face.

And in her imaginings of God she had been quite too realistic. God was not removed from her in any unknown sphere above and beyond herself. He was One with whom she had presumed to argue, to enter into antagonistic controversy.

"Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him? He that reproveth God, let him declare it!"

To-night for the first time Ryder seemed to have swept aside the cloud which obscured her vision, and showed her her attitude towards the Divinity in all its glaring impertinence, had made her realise the Jehovah grandeur of the God with whom she had felt at ease to enter into debate, as if He were altogether such an One as she.

And to-night, as she stood out alone on the fell, with the roar of the gale in her ears, she bowed herself, and bowing she was glad.

"Oh, my God! my God!" she moaned; "what about my father? If I give in to Thee, I'se niver be able to ruin him, and I did want to!"

Nell was no mighty prophet zealous for the Lord of Hosts like Elijah, yet nevertheless it seemed as though the still, small voice reached her, saying, "What doest thou here, My child?"

And in reply to that voice Nell, taking the question in all simplicity, cried out, "O God, for Christ's sake, save me from mysell and t' divil!"

And with that cry, though the storm in the great world around her raged as before and would rage throughout the length of her days, the storm in Nell's heart was stilled, and she entered the kingdom of heaven as a little child.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE old park in Weimar was a scene of brilliant festivity on the 20th of May, in honour of a birthday in the Grosherzolichen family.

"Ach, it is lovely, dearest Helenchen, that thou shouldest have come back to Germany, and that we should have this Fest, all ready prepared for thy birthday."

Eleanor laughed brightly. "Oh, it is entrancing—exquisite! I will forget England—I will be once again a happy German Mädchen!"

Kätchen laughed. "My child, thou canst never be the same again, that I see. Thou art different, even now, from the old Helenchen—altogether English—there is no hope for us at all!"

The night had not yet closed in, and there was the light of evening even yet glinting through the trees as they walked through the park. The excitements were only just beginning. Yet up and down the fairy lights were springing to life as if by magic, indicating the footpaths, the shrubberies, and rocky grottos with a whimsical illumination. Every window of the great Schloss was lighted up festively.

The people were gathering from all parts, and already the walks were thonged with eager parties all joyfully anticipating the social time.

All along the Belvedere Allee the chestnut-trees had decked themselves with their own unique ornaments, and the people were streaming along the avenue to enjoy the outdoor concert and refreshments of every description which were to be found at the far end.

Eleanor could not have found herself in more truly characteristic surroundings.

Everything was delightfully German. Up and down the groups of merry masqueraders, Foresters, Minnesingers and the like, were making their nonsense, and the sweetest strains of music could be heard from different quarters of the park.

The charm of the old Vaterland came down once more upon Eleanor on this sweet May evening, so warm and balmy, with the soft spring air playing tenderly in and out amidst the newborn summer traceries. And it must be confessed that Eleanor was pleased to get once again under the glamour of the old times, for up till that evening she had been strangely

disappointed at the result upon herself of this visit after which she had been so yearning.

Nothing could exceed the warmth of her reception by her Weimar friends—she was fêted and made much of to her heart's content.

Frau von Hervart had received her as of old, with her motherly manner, and the Herr General had outshone himself in his deferential though somewhat quizzical courtesies. The old professor was enchanted to see her again, though he was deeply despondent over her touch.

"Ach, mein Kind, mein Kind! This is fearful! This is unspeakable! Come, we must set to work this moment. All this carelessness, this inaccuracy, this slovenliness must be remedied!"

And Eleanor bore him no malice for his opinion, but laughed, and rejoicingly placed herself once more at his disposal. His despotic rule was refreshing after her year of liberty. And as at last she regained to some extent her old power so that she was able once again to draw out the deeper spirit of the music, without outraging the professor's ears by the impurity of her technique, he grew contented, and as he watched her victorious once more, it struck him that the playing was stronger, wider, fuller, but still a trifle harsh and ungoverned.

"Und die Liebe, mein Kind?" he questioned, and Eleanor blushed violently.

"Das Mädchen need say nothing?" and he smiled. "Das Mädchen has not yet found the true love."

"Herr Professor!"

"Ach, I know something—much! She would not play so, if she had found the true love!"

Eleanor laughed, but a trifle bitterly. "Die treue Liebe! I think I don't believe in it!"

"Nicht? You think you don't! Ach, Liebes Kind, you believe it still with all your heart. . . . You are waiting even now. Is it not so?"

Was she waiting? Eleanor did not answer the question,

could not have answered it. All she did know, however, was all the anticipated delight and charm of the dear old Vaterland did not somehow satisfy her. She had sought to take up the old life again exactly as she had left it, and she was dismayed to find that this could not be.

Even in Wiemar, amongst those she thought she loved the best, the loneliness had followed her. She had sought the old Friedhof, that she might rest awhile. She felt that the sight of the quiet grave would comfort her and satisfy her heart, but again she found this was not so.

She had gone again to the room over the stationer's shop, and looked once more from the little window, and watched the cloudlets as they hung over the blue distance, but still she could not feel as she once had felt—it seemed that the old Thüringer Wald had turned strange. She found herself comparing the landscape with the wild Moorshire fells with their woodless rockinesses. The lonely valleys, the Windy Scar, the Red Fell reared themselves before her eyes. She yearned strangely for a canter with the beloved Graf up some of the wild valleys, and certain rides, certain views, certain snatches of conversations passed through her mind rapidly, yet all the while her eyes were looking from the window of the room in which her mother had died.

But to-night on her birthday, surrounded by all this wealth of German festivity, surely the warmth of home would return once more. Now at last she would be able to satisfy herself with the spirits of the Vaterland.

Yet she was ashamed to discover how disappointed she had been all day because no birthday greeting had arrived from England.

"Miss Glyn really might have written just a line!" she thought.

So she and Kätchen strolled along, greeting their friends and listening to the music, and laughing at the wondrous antics of the masqueraders, until it was time to meet the Herr and Frau General as they had appointed, beneath the great beech in the neighbourhood of the band.

They sat down to listen to the music, which was certainly calculated to fill Eleanor with rapture.

"Oh, Kätchen dearest, we never have music like this in the open air at Farbiggin! Oh, think of it—what bliss to hear some beloved Tannhaüser again, and Euryanthe, and even those delicious Strauss waltzes!"

"I am gratified that there is still a little left of interest in the old Vaterland," said Kätchen; "for you know, Helenchen, that you cannot disguise the fact that after all your heart is in England—that Miss Glyn has taken it away, or else—well, other people!"

"There are no 'other people,'" said Eleanor serenely. "What nonsense you do imagine! Having confided in you a little, Kätchen, I rely on you not to do anything to remind me of die Liebe. It makes me so ashamed, and so angry—you can't imagine how I feel!"

"Well, well, ruhig!" as the Herr Professor would say. "Then we will dismiss all die Liebe from our minds, except die schwesterliche Liebe. She will not be a troublesome guest to spoil our feast! By the by, we might as well have something while we are waiting. Devoted to chocolate and ices as ever, I have perceived, Helenchen!"

So together they enjoyed themselves according to German custom, and the band still filled the air alluringly, and they waited on wondering what had hindered the Herr and Frau General from keeping the appointment.

"Cold?" asked Kätchen, as they sat on.

"Not a scrap!" Eleanor returned.

She wore a long white silk cloak, lined with fur, and a high collar of white fur framed her throat. It was thrown open in front, revealing a white gown, embroidered with gold—a gown new for the birthday.

"What a charming birthday I am having!" and Eleanor sighed. "I cannot believe that I am really here! You must excuse my making the remark so often."

"Yes, it was lovely of you to think of coming! Do you think we had better have a turn? We might light upon the parents."

The girls rose, and strolled off down the Chestnut Avenue.

"There they are, endlich!" cried Kätchen. "But who is that with them? They have evidently had some visitor who has hindered them."

Eleanor looked up, and saw the group of three walking towards them, and having seen, she walked forward composedly, but an odd look came into her eyes—a look of triumphant tenderness.

She made no remark, however, to Kätchen, and in another moment they had met.

'Ach, here you are, my children!" said Frau von Hervart. "We have been detained. Helenchen, mein Kind, it seems that this gentleman has come over from England with greetings for thy Geburtstag."

"My father and sister send you their very warmest good wishes, Miss Carradus." Ryder spoke quietly, but in his most stilted fashion, but the hand that Eleanor took was nervously cold.

"You are very kind indeed," said Eleanor. "Kätchen, this is Mr. Glyn—Mr. Glyn, Fräulein von Hervart."

Ryder bowed, and held out his hand. "I am very pleased to meet you," he remarked.

"Shall we all turn back to the music?" suggested Frau von Hervart. "I imagine that we are stopping the traffic."

So they all turned and walked back towards the brilliantly lighted bandstand, and perhaps because of the crowded thoroughfare, it came to pass that the Herr General and his wife and daughter passed forward in front, and in a few moments lost themselves in the festive throng of merry-makers, and Ryder and Eleanor were left alone.

"You are not angry?" he asked simply. Eleanor could not see his face very clearly in the darkening night, but she felt the anxiety in his tone, and as she looked up for an instant she noticed that his large grey eyes had sunk deeper into their sockets.

Truly love in action is no beautifier. And he, looking

down on the vision by his side, gasped at his own temerity. The boldness of the stroke had overwhelmed Eleanor.

"No, I am not angry—of course——" She added the last words after a slight pause. It was odd how her heart was dancing—odd how a sense of home was stealing over the evening. Yet she forced down the excitement stubbornly. "He has never made love to me in his life. This is nothing but his intolerable politeness!" she thought.

"I came, you know, because I really could not help it."

"Did you?"

"May I tell you why I could not help it?"

"I suppose so."

"I could not help coming to you on your birthday—the first day that you were free from my father's guardianship—because I love you with all my heart and life, and I want to know if you will marry me."

The case was perfectly clear. In the fewest possible words Ryder had explained it.

"And when do you want an answer?"

"To-night."

They walked on a few paces in silence. The busy throng moved around them; gay laughter, strains of music, the unknown babble of the German tongue—all this seemed unreal and dream-like to Ryder Glyn. He could only grasp the one fact that the tension was at its tightest stretch. He was actually walking with Eleanor Carradus; he had said what he had been dreaming of saying for so long, and any moment he might hear an answer.

"Would you mind a German wedding?"

Now, this young man thought he was prepared for every phase of answer that might come, but this short query seemed to take his breath away; it found him totally unprepared.

"I—that is to say—— Oh, of course—certainly, if you like."

Surely there was some step missing in the proceedings. Painfully he laboured to set the matter straight.

"Then do I understand—is it true that you really do love me—will marry me?"

Eleanor could not restrain herself from laughing a soft little laugh.

"Oh, dear me! How stupid you are,—Teddie!"

He could have seized her in his arms there and then, but even he was wise enough to know that further advance at present might mean instant retreat. He took her hand, however, and laid it in his arm.

"I don't seem to mind how stupid I am, if you will call me by that name, Eleanor."

"But you never courted me," she expostulated.

"But I have always tried to be kind."

"Kind!" There was a touch of scorn in the voice. "Kind! and you never even wished me goodbye!"

"I could not trust myself."

It was dark now except for the illuminations and the glorious heaven full of laughing stars and radiant planets, and the two wandered away from the main thoroughfare down a grassy slope.

"Would you like to sit down and listen to the music?" asked Eleanor.

"Very much. How wonderful it is here! What is it that they are playing?"

"Ein Liebestraum," said Eleanor, with a peaceful sigh of intense satisfaction.

"And I may write and tell Mary?"

"Oh, yes! Dear Mary!"

CHAPTER XL

NELL was sitting making a little frock for Polly as John Fleming entered the room. She rose.

"Well, dear?"

"It's a' reet, Jack!"

"Then may I?" he asked tremulously.

"I suppose so," and she yielded herself to him.

"And you don't mind my being poor and beginning quietly?"

"Naá, Jack."

"And you won't let anything divide us any more?"

"Niver."

There was silence in the room save for the ticking of the great clock.

"And, Jack! Thoo hesn't sin Uncle William, happen?"

"No. I've seen no one and heard from no one in Farbiggin for a long time. At least it seems long to me. But my father it was who said, 'Jack, you are a fool! Go along and try again;' and so I came."

Nell was silent and fidgeted with her needle.

"Why, has something happened?" he added anxiously.

Surely the cup of happiness was not going to be dashed from his lips.

"Oh no, nowt has happened; nobbut I can give tha £2,000 any time for thy business!"

Jack's ambitious mind could not help leaping in excitement at hearing Nell's calm sentence; but the next instant he gasped—

"But, Nell, you never thought that I knew that?"

"Ger oot, thoo auld fool, Jack! What does ta tek me or?"

For answer Jack kissed her passionately.

"And, Nell dear, I meant to tell you—I can't make you into a lady as——"

Nell sprang to her feet.

"Jack! Jack!" she cried piteously. "Don't thee say yon word again! Yon word 'lady' hes va near been t' ruin o' Nell Carradus. It's a 'Bacca lass as thoo's courted and it's a 'Bacca lass thoo's getten."

"A Bacca Queen, dearest!" he corrected.

"And Jack's wife!" she added triumphantly.

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